

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

February 2000

Words From the Soul:

An Exciting New Book on Transpersonal Psychology By Dr. Stuart Sovatsky

Reviewed by Wilma Wake

One of the highlights for me of the conventions of 1995 and 1999 is what happened afterwards. Because one was in Los Angeles and one in San Francisco, I was able both times to get to Oakland to meet with my favorite author, psychologist Dr. Stuart Sovatsky. His two published books and various articles give us a psychological framework that calls upon the best of Eastern and Western traditions of spirituality and presents the concepts in a way that causes my Swedenborgian heart to sing. I feel that in his works I am hearing Swedenborg's approach to psychology as it is expressed in a variety of spiritual traditions and integrated into modern psychological understandings.

To appreciate his writing, it's important to understand a bit about his background. He spent roughly the last 26 years experiencing kundalini yoga and studying with yogis who themselves spend at least ten hours a day engaged in yogic disciplines. He traveled to various temples in India to study kundalini yoga first-hand. After twenty years of experience, he decided to write a Ph. D. thesis on the origins of tantric yoga and its role in the West. He took his A.B. at Princeton University's Dept. of Religion in 1971, and his Ph. D. at the California Institute of Integral Studies in 1984. His dissertation was originally published in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, and as two chapters in the book *Living Yoga*.

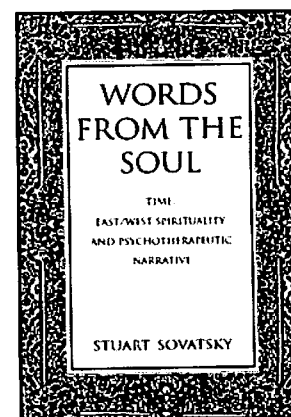
Dr. Sovatsky authored the first federally-funded school program for children's meditation in 1975, and he was the first choice to codirect Ram Dass' experimental prison ashram in 1977. He is currently the vice-president of the International Kundalini Research Network, board member of the Yoga Research Institute, the Spiritual Emergence Network, and the California Institute of Integral Studies where he teaches and was a recent candidate for its presidency. He is director of the Kundalini Clinic in San Francisco and teaches at both JFK University and the California Institute of Integral Studies. All of this, I am convinced, makes him the foremost expert on kundalini and spiritual emergence in the Western world. He also works as a psychotherapist, specializing in marital counseling, where he has probably saved over 100 marriages with his spiritual approach to psychology.

Given all of his accomplishments, when I first went to meet him in 1995, I expected to find a man of at least 80 years, muttering chants or using technical jargon that would be meaningless to me. I was delighted to find Dr. Sovatsky to be young (well he's 50 years old; to me, that is young!), very pleasant, and extremely articulate. He is well aware of the depth and complexity of the concepts he writes about and has been extremely patient and kind in helping me understand his work. I'm still trying to grasp it all; I think it will take years to absorb the depth of what he is presenting. But after two meetings with

him, several phone calls, and reading each of his books at least three times, I am starting to grasp some of the basics, and I feel that his work is extremely important for Swedenborgians to know about. (Alert to future students in Pastoral Care at SSR—this will be on the reading list!) What most impresses me about this man is that he (1) has a brilliant scientific mind, and as a psychologist has studied in depth the great spiritual and psychological disciplines of East and West; and (2) he is a deeply spiritual man with daily spiritual practices of his own. Does this sound familiar to you? To me, it reminds me of what Swedenborg represents: a true integration of love and wisdom, mind and heart. Dr. Sovatsky is one of those rare people in the modern world who has delved deeply into spiritual experience as well as into academic research, and he speaks with a voice of authenticity that is well worth hearing.

His most recent book, the one I want to discuss, was published in 1998 by the State University of New York Press for their Series in Transpersonal and Humanistic Psychology: *Words from the Soul: Time, East/West Spirituality, and Psychotherapeutic Narrative*.

In order to put this work in context for Swedenborgians, I'd like to begin with an observation by Wilson Van Dusen: Swedenborg gave us a theological



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It May Be Easier Than You Think

Adam Seward

There are three types of love according to the New Testament—eros, philla, and agape.

The first is philla, which means brotherly love. The second is eros, which has often been said to mean romantic love. More closely, it means a sense of being incomplete without the other. This is the love of Ruth and Boaz, or the love spoken of in the song, "Shine on, Harvest Moon." The third is agape, which is selfless love for the other; also called sacrificial love.

The types of love according to our church doctrine

Our church teaches us that the types of love are love of the Lord and the neighbor vs. love of the self and the world. Agape (sacrificial) love is really love of the Lord and the neighbor, and eros or philla could mean both the love of the self and the world. The ideal would be for us to approach all these loves as sacrificial (or unconditional) love. However, it isn't that love of the self and the world are evil loves.

What makes all of the loves sacrificial love is that the loves are kept in the proper order.

Why don't we love sacrificially?

Grant for the moment that we are capable of loving someone with romantic love or with brotherly love. Why don't we love others sacrificially?

We don't love others sacrificially because they are difficult. But as one person observed, "We love ourselves in spite of our faults. Why can't we love others in spite of theirs?" It doesn't take any great talent to love only your friends. As our Lord said, "If you love only someone who loves you, will God

praise you for that? Even sinners love people who love them."

We don't love others sacrificially because we're afraid. We're afraid that they won't love us in return. We're afraid that if we love someone sacrificially, without any thought of our own personal gain, that people will take advantage of us. In short, we're just plain afraid. But sometimes fear is a loss of perspective. The reaction that we think we'll get from others is worse than the way they would actually react.

We don't love others sacrificially because we don't think we can. But we are capable of much more than we think we are. History tells stories of people who went ahead and did what they could anyway.

How do we practice sacrificial love?

We love ourselves in spite of our faults. Why can't we love others in spite of theirs?

The mistake we make is thinking that sacrificial love can only be done in great things. The truly revolutionary acts in life are the small acts of kindness that we're free to do, and that people may never notice. Here is how to love others sacrificially.

People are going to be difficult. Love them anyway. If you look at someone's faults honestly—including your own—and still love them, then you've got a clue as to what love is all about. In fact, one of the great pleasures in life is to love someone in spite of their flaws, because their flaws make them more lovable. Sometimes you may be afraid of people. Love them anyway. You can love them because if you take your fear and multiply it by ten, that may be what the other person is feeling. The great secret that people hide is that they're all hurting inside. It's love that holds us all together. You may not think that you

can love other people sacrificially. Try it anyway. One of the sweetest victories comes in doing something that you think you can't do. It's easy to gamble with money, but can you gamble on the notion that you can do good? How much would you be willing to bet me that you can do a good thing today? Can you make up your mind that today you will do something for someone without any thought of reward?

Swedenborg says in the book *Heaven and Hell* that it's a lot easier to get into heaven than people think. I would guess the same thing is true of love. It's a lot easier to love the Lord and our neighbor than we think.

The Rev. Adam Seward, formerly part-time minister at the Pawnee Rock Swedenborgian Church in Kansas, moved to Chicago in early December '99 to start up a Native American ministry in that area.

Reprinted from the September 1999 *Plains Banner*.



THE MESSENGER

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

February 2000
Volume 221 No. 2
Whole Number 5247

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.

Words From the Soul:

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psychology.¹ His task is not to break with ancient traditions in a new breed of understanding, but simply to deepen our understanding of ancient traditions. To attack Swedenborg is not to attack a peculiar breed of thinking but to attack the real meaning of depth of the ancient traditions.² In the same way, I see Sovatsky's task as to go deeply into the ancient traditions. In particular, he attempts to explain the intricacies of the Hindu Yogic traditions to the modern Western mind. His material is not new, but many of the concepts he addresses have not been available to us in English.

Sovatsky's introduction, "Toward a Spiritual Psychotherapy," sets the stage for the rest of the book. He reminds us that so much of clinical psychology today deals with insight or catharsis and wonders what these techniques might be *for the sake of*. He suggests that the core human sentiment is awe—"a soothing, ecstatic, daunting awe of the vast Eternal, awe of one another, or of something profound."³ Sovatsky points out that we have all had times of awe at momentous life events such as weddings, births, and funerals.

Van Dusen discusses a similar concept when he writes of mystical experience. He says that many people wait for a heavenly thunderbolt to knock them down, but that such an experience is rare. "Most mystical experience is very direct and simple, like the soft glance of a lover that says it all...One thing that will surprise some readers is that I concentrate on the smallest signs. They can't get too small to notice. The finest way into the direct experience of God is to learn to recognize the little signs you already have, here and now, in the commonplace."⁴

Sovatsky realizes that to bring this type of theology into clinical psychology involves bringing "praise, forgiveness, and the like, into my clinical work in a wide range of situations." Yet when he has done so, progress would occur in the moment but then "wither impermanently away." (Sovatsky, 2.) Then, he says, "I accepted impermanence as our given condition. I let in the fact or sense that all passes and shared this observa-

tion with my clients as our common condition, a condition whose demand on us to merely persevere was exactly what matured us and, to a great degree, regardless of previous deprivations." (Sovatsky, 2). By bringing these concepts into the lives of his clients, Sovatsky found he was bringing them hope. So much of conventional clinical psychology is the opposite. The basic emotions, diagnostic categories, and analytic terms often have not brought clients to a place of awe.

In his first chapter, "Questioning Words—Reviving Time," he discusses how soul psychology differs from traditional psychological practice. One important difference is that the psychological tradition focuses on the past, rather than on the potential for awe in the present.

This is one of my favorite examples from his clinical work:

"CLIENT. You keep seeing me as this really good person and I notice that I am not so interested in my deep dark secrets.

THERAPIST. That's true, yet certainly you can bring up what you are thinking of as your dark secrets. But the secret that I ask you to consider as, at times, the darkest and deepest secret, the secret of all secrets, is what a beautiful human being you are. And, if you look around when you know this, you will see everybody else in this same way, even though they might be acting otherwise, as if their beauty is hidden from them, too." (Sovatsky, 109)

Sovatsky also distinguishes soul psychology from much of the work being done today in transpersonal psychology. What is transpersonal psychology? There are many definitions. I particularly like this one from psychologist Stanislav Grof:

The most exciting aspect of all the revolutionary developments in modern Western science—astronomy, physics, biology, medicine, information and systems theory, depth psychology, parapsychology, and consciousness research—is the fact that the new image of the universe and of human nature increasingly resembles that of the ancient and Eastern spiritual philosophies, such as the different systems of yoga, the Tibetan Vajrayana, Kashmir Shaivism, Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Kabbalah, Christian

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mysticism, or gnosticism. It seems that we are approaching a phenomenal synthesis of the ancient and the modern and a far-reaching integration of the great achievements of the East and West that might have profound consequences for the life on this planet.⁵

I see Sovatsky as being within the realm of transpersonal psychology, yet also on its cutting edge. He points out that many conventional transpersonal therapists will be concerned about terms such as the Buddhist "no self" or the kundalini yogic "transcendental unity." Many transpersonalists advocate developing an ego/self before attempting to transcend it.

Yet, Sovatsky, in appealing to the ancient spiritual traditions, recommends that it is "better to avoid these semantic difficulties by dropping the terms *ego* or *self* and to speak instead of the importance of social competencies to be developed. We might too consider the phrase, 'First develop *superego-soul* sentiments, then you will have a characterological basis from which to grow toward transcendental consciousness.'" (Sovatsky, 79)

The way I understand this concept is that every bit of work I do on myself can be part of the larger journey of

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connection with the Divine. I do not need to feel that first I must work on my "ego" issues and then I can transcend ego. I do not work first on my emotional self and then turn to the spiritual. The ego and the transcendence of it must be integrated, much as Swedenborg talks of spirit and matter being intertwined in our very being. This also means I can bring expressions of the Divine, such as forgiveness and hope, into the most emotionally laden interactions.

I understand this part of Sovatsky's book to tell us that we can bring hopefulness and forgiveness even into therapeutic sessions and, in fact, into all interactions in our lives.

I am reminded of Van Dusen's reference to a Zen Buddhist story. "In a Zen story a sincere student asks his master to show the Buddha nature. The master says casually, 'You just had breakfast. Did you wash your dishes?' This is a very precise answer to the student's question. The Buddha nature is to do the minor good that comes to your hand, i.e. wash the dishes. It would belie the Buddha nature to talk of goodness and leave someone else to wash the dishes. For me, Swedenborg has this same concreteness that is so well exemplified in Zen Buddhism, which is perhaps why the Zen master Daisetz Suzuki translated Swedenborg into Japanese."⁶

I see Sovatsky as having the same kind of concrete approach to the spiritual as does Swedenborg; an approach that allows us to bring every moment of our existence into our intimacy with the Divine.

The first half of *Words from the Soul* draws from "universal spiritual principles of gratitude, forgiveness, poignant impermanence, and the like, while remaining largely within the precincts of conventional developmental theory." (Sovatsky, 141). In the second half of his book, he explores human development as it is expressed through Eastern concepts of kundalini yoga.

Before finding Sovatsky's books, I saw kundalini yoga only in terms of the experience of energy moving up the

spine that can arise during spiritual practice. I read a number of years ago Van Dusen's interpretation of a nighttime experience of Swedenborg's as an experience of the Hindu kundalini. (Van Dusen, *Journal of Dreams*, 127).

Sovatsky sees kundalini yoga as encompassing much more. He finds that "kundalini yoga, as do the origins of Christianity, reminds us that truth is an incarnation, a logos become flesh, and not a text." (142). He sees it as giving us a series of overlapping maturations (rather than discrete stages) that can all be considered an "awakening." He sees this as particularly true in the tantric tradition in which spirit and matter weave together. The complete integration of body and soul, spirit and matter, that is presented in tantric yoga is rarely found in the West. One exception I would note, of course, is that the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg do present the spirit/matter integration.

Sovatsky's book gives us a detailed account of the development of the "ensouled body"; undoubtedly the most complete account available in English and presented to the modern mind with the wisdom of a psychologist. I cannot even begin to summarize this portion of his book, but urge interested readers to explore it on their own.

Sovatsky's final chapter, "Spiritual Emergence: Toward a Spirituality-Inclusive Psychopathology," provides hope when he says that "even the most psychotic, psychopathic, suicidal, or organic conditions are riddled with spiritual poignancy and even the most profound enlightenment confronts its attainer with new problems and challenges. For the essence of 'crisis' is a temporal urgency which can hover ambiguously between 'danger' and 'maturational opportunity' (184). I understand this to say that every event and every crisis of my life can become part of my journey toward regeneration.

He writes of "conversions" as something beyond a change of denomination of faith-tradition to a conversion "to greater awe and faith." (Sovatsky, 187). This is true even of those with psychiatric labels. In fact, struggling with such conditions can lead us deeper into our spirituality. Instead of dividing the ego and superego we can

work with both at the same time in what Sovatsky calls "character."

Many transpersonally-oriented people talk now of spiritual emergency and spiritual emergence as uncomfortable experiences than can arise from direct experience of the Divine. Sovatsky suggests that all psychopathology is really spiritual emergence. This suggests to me that every experience of my life can be part of my awakening to awe.

There are many ways to understand Sovatsky's book. He draws from Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Foucault, Kierkegaard, Buddhism, and kundalini yoga. As a Swedenborgian, I see Sovatsky presenting a modern and workable combination of love, wisdom, and uses. His approach takes us deep into the ancient traditions and presents them in such a way that it seems on the cutting edge of the most modern works in psychology, medicine, and physics. In the same way, Swedenborg's theological psychology blends together concepts of East and West to show us how to move beyond dualism into the integration of spirit and matter.

This book is not easy to read. It is tightly and densely written. When I first started his book, I wished it were easier to read so that I could read it faster. Then I thought of all the spiritual books I have read quickly. I have piles of them around my house; even more piles of them given away. There are many books today that say very similar things and offer a simplistic understanding of life. Sovatsky's book can be read again and again, with each reading leading one deeper into understanding. Its concepts are well worth the attention and discussion of Swedenborgians.

¹ Wilson Van Dusen, *The Presence of Other Worlds: The Psychological/Spiritual Findings of Emanuel Swedenborg*. Chrysalis Books (Imprint of the Swedenborg Foundation): West Chester, PA. 1994. P. 115.

² *Ibid.*, 205.

³ Stuart Sovatsky, *Words from the Soul: Time, East/West Spirituality, and Psychotherapeutic Narrative* (New York: State University of New York Press), 1998. 1-2.

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The Gate of Stillness Between the Finite and the Infinite

John Brighton

My interest in Emanuel Swedenborg began about ten years ago when I was living in Philadelphia and came upon some of his works at the bookstore of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral. I found them fascinating and difficult to understand. As learning aids I began taking notes and writing down some of my reflections on topics I felt drawn to. On a number of occasions I'd explore the relationship of Swedenborg's theology to modern science and holistic forms of healing. One topic that still fascinates me in this regard is Swedenborg's use of breath control in the process of his spiritual development.

As a child Swedenborg intuited a method of breath control that helped him to concentrate his mind and, eventually, to enter his inner spiritual world. His experiments with breathing were unusual in a time when information about Swara Yoga¹, the science of the breath, and its method of breath control known as pranayama, wasn't available to the West. He was able to still his breath to the point where lung activity ceased and a form of "inner breathing" took over, which he felt was the breathing of the spirit. By suspending lung activity he found that he could remain in a conscious trance for hours, a state similar to the anaerobic breathing yogis evoke while encased underground for days without oxygen. "He concluded that unless one reaches this tranquil state whereby the external respiratory motions are stilled, it is impossible to arrive at the higher visions of truth."²

For Swedenborg the breath had a symbolic meaning as well as a practical application. In *Apocalypse Explained* n. 375 he writes of the "breath of the nostrils" as representative of the "celestial life which is from the Lord." From a practical perspective breath control produced experiences that brought him close to a state of physical death or to what we now call a "near-death experience," which gave him insight into the relationship of the mind to the body:

I was once led into a state of unconsciousness as to my physical senses, thus

nearly into the state of people who are dying, but with my inner life remaining intact and with the ability to think, so that I could grasp and retain in memory what happens to people who die and are awakened..."³

As a scientist, Swedenborg was able to record his spiritual experiences with clinical accuracy. Yet he avoided any attempt to explain his observations in scientific terms. He considered science to be a naturalistic way of thinking limited by the concepts of space and time. Accordingly the spiritual world is not under the laws of space-time. Yet it is the cause of our space-time world, a world that falsely informs the natural mind, via the senses, and leads to concepts that stand in the way of spiritual enlightenment. Breath control appears to have helped Swedenborg escape these naturalistic trappings by simulating a physical death and releasing the spirit from its earthly burden. Swara Yoga and its method of pranayama offers a clue to how this may have occurred.

I became familiar with pranayama from my training in Ayurveda, India's 5000 year old holistic system of healing known as the "science of life." In the various Ayurvedic forms of healing pranayama is employed in two basic ways: 1) as a way to synchronize the rhythms of the spiritopsychosoma in order to improve metabolic processes, and 2) as a technique for spiritual development. The former is viewed as prana (the life force) descending into the body in order to maintain physiological processes, and the latter as prana ascending to its original source. Both are considered regenerative processes, cellular and spiritual.

According to Swara Yoga, the air flowing through each nostril carries the pranic life force that activates the polar mechanisms of the body. Air flowing through the right nostril stimulates the pingala nadi or solar channel. This evokes thermogenesis. Air entering through the left nostril stimulates the ida nadi or lunar channel. This has an opposite, cooling effect on the body. Therefore, the pingala nadi is an active force, and the ida nadi a passive one.

Normally the breath alternates in 60-90 minute cycles (with geographic variations) between each nostril.⁴ Periodically the breath flowing through each nostril

becomes equal for a brief period. Oscillation ceases, and during these intervals a third channel, the shushumna nadi, becomes active through the center of the spine. When the shushumna nadi operates, all physical and (lower) mental processes are suspended (an effect Western research has not yet explored). On average each person takes 900 breaths in one hour. During these the shushumna nadi is active for only 40 seconds. Technically speaking, during these 40 seconds or so the body is dead! Unbeknownst to us we are having 24 mini near-death experiences each day.

According to Swara Yoga these brief moments are spiritually important. Those practicing pranayama for spiritual regeneration seek to extend the duration of these intervals and bring them under control. It is not commonly known that pranayama is not about increasing the amount of oxygen to the lungs. On the contrary, it aims to increase the utilization of decreasing amounts of oxygen by expanding the interval between the inbreath and the outbreath. The less oxygen the body receives the less active it becomes until eventually it becomes quite still. Swara Yoga realizes that by reducing a life-sustaining resource, in this case prana delivered in oxygen, the entire spiritopsychosoma becomes more unified. When it reaches a point where the active and passive functions neutralize physiological and mental operations, the shushumna nadi becomes active, and the spirit is set free, depending on the degree to which the equilibrium is complete.



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There are two kinds of equilibrium: dynamic and static. The process of cellular regeneration relies on dynamic equilibrium. In dynamic equilibrium the spirit and the body it enlivens are held together by a reciprocal resonance. By equalizing the oppositional forces of the body, vibration ceases to the point where reciprocal resonance cannot take place, releasing the source of vibration, the spirit (in Swara Yoga, the mind). Freed from its somatic capsule one experiences the truth of one's identity, and a sense of somatic peace and conscious joy that can build to a level of euphoria. The burden of the body has been taken off, allowing the spirit to vibrate as pure wave in the faster, lighter, medium of the spirit world.

However, the process of creating stillness is a gradual one. Both Swara Yoga and Swedenborg realize that it cannot take place in one fell swoop. The body and the natural mind (unconscious) will challenge one every step of the way. As the spirit begins to draw itself out of its psychosomatic capsule the vessel will rebel, and one will go through trials and tribulations: chaos, advent, the dark night of the soul. Although the body has been likened to a garment, regeneration is not like taking off a coat. It is a delicate, creative, cooperative process that requires the help of a compassionate community called "the church," and especially, the help and genius of a higher power.

The themes of breath, death, stillness, and peace are quite prevalent in spiritual literature worldwide. According to Swara Yoga the nature of the breath (regardless of the numerous methods of spiritual regeneration that one is using) reflects our mental states, and by becoming aware of the breath an inner journey begins because the breath is the link between the mind and the body. The journey of creating stillness in oneself begins with an act of introspection in which the mind observes itself. In order to perceive itself it must do so through contrasts. To create the contrast between what is "good" and "evil" Swedenborg realized that adherence to the decalogue was indispensable. Only then could the

spirit observe what occurred to its creation and compare it with the ends for which it was made: the Alpha observes the Omega. When the observer and the observed become balanced one becomes whole: the Alpha and Omega become one. The "eye" becomes single, and the breath becomes calm.

However, as Swedenborg observed in

As a child Swedenborg intuited a method of breath control that helped him to concentrate his mind and, eventually, to enter his inner spiritual world. His experiments with breathing were unusual in a time when information on Swara Yoga, the science of the breath, and its method of breath control known as pranayama, were not available to the West.

the spiritual world, the integration of polarities is a continuing process of regeneration that leads towards the heights of God's love and wisdom. Polarity is our abstraction of a vast interconnected complexity which is not in our power to completely understand. However, the process must begin where we are.

It was Swedenborg's experiments with the breath and his breakthrough into the spiritual world that opened up the understanding of this process for the Western world. This appears to have been the seed for depth psychology, especially the work of Carl Jung, who comes to mind as one who early on realized the psychological nature of this paradoxical state, which he referred to as the "coniunctio oppositorum," a term he borrowed from the alchemists. More recently, the field of psychobiology has provided the research that is already integrating the spiritual methods of yoga

with modern science. Swara-yoga-like experiments in the West are already using sound technology, such as "Hemisync," developed by Robert Monroe (in a secular context) to explore brain-hemispheric balance and out-of-body states (spiritual release).⁵

These are but a few of the many signs of healing that is taking place between science and religion. These explorations are finding their way to perhaps where Swedenborg once stood at the gate of stillness between the finite and the infinite.

¹ See: *Breath, Mind, and Consciousness*, by Harish Johari.

² *Pioneer of Inner Space*. Justin O'Brian P. 13.

³ *Arcana Coelestia*, 169. From *A Thoughtful Soul*. George Dole, ed.

⁴ Research in the field of psychobiology has confirmed these nasal oscillations and classifies them under *ultradian rhythms*. These findings describe the biochemical and physiological effects that accompany these rhythms through neuro-endocrine pathways. See *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing* by Ernest Lawrence Rossi. For more information on how this research has enriched that of Swara Yoga see *Anatomy And Physiology of Yogic Practices*, by M.M. Gore.

⁵ One of the interesting findings of psychobiological research is the close relationship that nasal breathing has with the hemispheres of the brain. The left nostril stimulates the right hemisphere while the right nostril stimulates the left hemisphere. Swara Yoga and the Hemi-Sync technique seek to bring the hemispheres into balance.

Other books of interest: *Ayurveda: The Science of Self Healing*, by Vasant Lad; *Body Time*, by Gay Gaer Luce; *Religion and Science: From Swedenborg to Chaotic Dynamics*, by Gregory L. Baker; *Healing Our Worldview*, by John Hitchcock; *A Psychology of Spiritual Healing*, by Eugene Taylor; *Whole Brain Thinking*, by Jacquelyn Wonder and Priscilla Donovan; *Mind: Its Mysteries and Control*, by Swami Sivananda; *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*, by Itzhak Bentov.

John Brighton has a holistic health consulting practice specializing in Ayurveda and Naturopathy. He and his wife Christine became members of the New York New Church in October 1999. ☸

More Archival Gold

Larry Conant

One of the great untold stories of the Swedenborgian denomination is the active interest in the abolitionist movement in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Much of this interest may be attributed to Swedenborg's understanding of the ability of the Africans to "receive the goods and truths of Heaven more easily than the rest." (*Arcana Coelestia* 2604) and the overall perspective of free choice attributed to Swedenborg's writings.

While involvement in the Abolitionist movement wasn't throughout all Swedenborgian societies of the time, there are persistent rumors that many societies were active participants. The greatest challenge in documenting this involvement is the fact that any anti-slavery activity was illegal, particularly after the Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850. It is therefore believed that this activity was not recorded in the official records of the societies. There are some exceptions with Swedenborgians like Lydia Marie Child whose involvement with the abolitionist movement is fairly well recorded (see *Lost Legacy* published by the Swedenborgian Foundation). As a denomination, we suffer this void in a critical part of our heritage. Locating the following sermon was therefore a real surprise. It is possible that the only reason this sermon survived is that it was in the hands of the Rev. Samuel Worcester's son, Samuel H. Worcester, during the critical years until the end of the Civil War.

The sermon is currently held in the archives at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts. The Rev. Samuel Worcester was born in Thornton, New Hampshire on August 31, 1793. He died in Bridgewater, Mass. on Christmas Day 1844. Samuel was licensed to preach the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in 1819. He preached in Newton and Boston, Massachusetts; Natchez, Mississippi; Gloucester and Cambridgeport Mass., In 1834 he became the preacher for the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater.

His son, Samuel Howard Worcester, also became a minister of the New Jerusalem Church and was minister of the Baltimore, Maryland church and the Gardiner, Maine church. In 1861 he went to Gloucester, Massachusetts where he practiced medicine. In 1868 he moved to Salem, Massachusetts and devoted much time to editing and translating Swedenborg's writings.

The cover sheet indicates the sermon was written for April 6, 1837, and was presented in Providence, Rhode Island in that year. It was revised in 1843 with a note, "This was delivered on Fast Day; it is not suitable for the sabbath." There is an additional note which states, "I have made copious extracts from this discourse. S.H. Worcester, Baltimore Nov. 19th 1856.

ABOLITIONIST

John VIII, 32 *Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*

Natural men think that slavery consists in being controlled by others; spiritual men think that it consists in being under the dominion of evil and false principles. Natural men think that, when they are controlled by their own evil and false principles, they are still free—and, indeed, that they

have at least as much freedom as when they are governed by good and true principles. Spiritual men think that those who are under the dominion of evil and false principles within themselves, are much more perfectly enslaved, than those who are subjected to the tyranny of others. And they are right in this; for he who is under the dominion of another is contracted as to his external operations, but the internal operations of his spirit have some degree of freedom; but he who is ruled by tyrants whose dominion is within him, is wholly a slave.

This error of natural men results from a more general error. Whatever their evil loves lust after, they regard as good; and the darkness which they love because their deeds are evil, they regard as light. Man's freedom consists in doing what he loves, and according to his own understanding. But while he loves what is evil, and believes what is false, freedom to do it is not genuine freedom; it is as perfectly opposite in its nature to real freedom, as what he calls good and true are to genuine good and truth.

All men in their natural, unregenerated state are slaves. "He that committeth sin, is the slave of sin." They may not appear to be in bondage under any man; but it is even worse to be impelled to do evil by our own evil principles than by others. And it is not true that they are uncontrolled by others. They are slaves to the customs of those around them. Though they boast of their independence, they dare not shun an evil nor do a good, contrary to custom: they scarcely dare wear a garment or speak a word, except according to the law or fashion of others.

This is true of those who are ruled by love of the world; and those whose self-love leads them to discard the opinions and customs of others are perpetually annoyed and tormented because their hands are against every man, and every man's hands are against them.

Regenerate men are free men: the truth makes them free. When the truth first gains power in them, and becomes the ruler in their minds, they are not truly free. It must conquer their enemies, before the blessings of true freedom can be enjoyed. It must overcome their evil loves. Before they can receive such loves as agree with the truth, they will act against their natural loves, but from little spiritual love. When heavenly loves are received, which have their delight in doing the truth, one has genuine freedom.

There is no other power which can give a man true freedom. Falsities in the mind are naturally receptive of evil affections. They are vessels adapted to corresponding evils: and when the mind is stored with falsities, these evils will flow in, abide, and operate. And, when falsity and wit are there united in the mind, they bring forth an endless multitude of young devils and satans, who grow up with a mighty lust to enslave the souls, and a standing army to perpetuate its slavery.

But truths in the mind are vessels naturally acceptive of good. Good affections result from daring the truth, and you receive from it some love of the good which the truth teaches: but, by acting according to false principles, you receive loves for doing evil. False doctrines, and falsities of any kind, have no ability or tendency to save, redeem, or give man freedom from the dominion of his spiritual enemies. They are themselves the very arms of all his oppression. But truth is the arm of God, by which he saves us from the power of all that hate us.

These observations may have some use in regulating our thoughts and conduct concerning the most exciting and momentous political topic of this day. Two and a half million

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ABOLITIONIST (Continued from page 23)

people are held in abject slavery by another people who boast more of the freedom and justice of their political and social institutions than all the rest of the world. We speak not of the wrongs of others. "Nathan said unto David, Here art the man."

We have no intention of entering into all the questions relative to this subject, which are beginning to agitate the public mind. But it seems to us great folly to pretend that the evil can be winked away, or that any class of men in any part of this country can long withhold from it either thought, word, or action. The question arising from this subject will soon divide the nation into two great political parties; and the interests of the whole and of each individual will be deeply involved in the contest. None can be silent nor inactive.

But all of either party need not think and feel, and speak and act, in the same manner. And it is quite time that men who have any religious principles should begin to consider what view they ought to take of such parts of the whole subject, as are now within the range of their knowledge.

If we look back to the condition of those African tribes which have become the objects of slavery and consider their moral condition before the slave trade was commenced, we do not find that they have been degraded by being sold into slavery. Many of their mutual faculties have doubtless become cramped and stunted. These are the falsities which are now bound in slavery; but in their own country these same faculties had long been employed in the most enormous acts of wickedness, and especially in the civil wars which threatened the extermination of these tribes. Their raging evils had almost wholly destroyed their understandings. Charity was gone, and they had no truth and no ability to receive any by which charity could be restored.

At the same time, the Christian church was coming to its end. The doctrine of justification by faith alone had usurped the throne in man's understanding and turned his will away from charity. This doctrine tended to restrain men's natural will no further than good worldly policy required. It kept men's minds open to some knowledge of truth: their understandings were strongly exercised in certain ways, and hence they had a capacity to see what evils were expedient, and what were not expedient. When their love of dominion produced wars, they would soon learn that peace was a better policy. Where they were inclined to become drunkards, the same good policy would soon produce a reformation. Other gross evils were restrained in the same manner.

But some evils were tolerated more, and some less. All were tolerated internally, and certain forms of all were always kept in fashion. Avarice lost its evil name.

That a people of this character wholly devoted to intellectual excellence, and secretly ruled by avarice, should conclude that the stupid Africans were without souls, and were a lawful prey for their love of gain, is not surprising. Satans make slaves of all the devils they can approach; but they are themselves perpetually tormented by the evils infused into them by devils.

My friends, I have given you the elements of the history of slavery. It is perpetrated by the same evils and falsities in which it originated. But the effects of the last judgment are beginning to reach their fearful enormity. The minds of all

The minds of the whites must be changed—essentially changed—before they will emancipate the slaves; and is it not obviously our duty to produce such a change as will give this freedom to the whites, that they may know how and be willing to give true freedom to the blacks?

men on the face of the earth are manifesting some rising tendencies—some feelings of personal rights and some perception of the injustice of the old system of oppression. The New Jerusalem is beginning to come down from heaven; and its truths are so far received, that they begin to break the arm of the oppressor, and set the captive free.

This mighty work they will accomplish throughout the whole earth. But what they do they will do not by violence, but with saving love. They will seek to give freedom only so far as they can give genuine freedom.

Consider the extreme ignorance of the slaves in their present state, and you will see that they must be instructed before they can act as free citizens. Suppose that they should now be liberated; who would become their instructors? The whites. What would they teach them? What they themselves believe. Would this really improve the moral condition of the colored people? No: it would bind them in a tenfold worse slavery than the present. It would open their minds far more interiorly than they are now opened and fill them with such false principles as their masters possess.

Remember that the external political and social principles of men, are derived from their inmost loves, and their religious principles. These, with the slaveholders are without doubt, generally evil. We know that their religious principles are almost without exception false; and we have no reason to believe that their ruling loves are generally good.

Now, if their principles were imparted to the slaves, what would be the consequences? Remember what we have said of the depravity of the wills of the colored race. Fill their understanding with the falsities of modern faith, and they will be bound in eternal slavery. If the whites were to impart their own false principles to the slaves, they would indeed make them twofold more the children of hell than themselves.

None upon earth are fully competent to comprehend the moral condition of the white and of the colored people of this country, and decide which is the most depraved. We have a very unfavorable opinion in respect to both classes. Some evils are more prevalent with the whites, and others with the blacks.

But we are to consider very seriously that much is required of those to whom much is given, and little of those to whom little is given. The white people have incomparably more knowledge of the truths of the Word than the colored people. No law prevents their learning as much as they will, and doing it without control or restraint. But the blacks are permitted to learn but very few truths, are scarcely ever taught to shun any evil as sin and in most respects are not possessed of freedom and rationality enough to make them accountable agents.

Evils which are indulged without knowing them to be evils are not counted as sins; and they do not destroy man's capacity to be saved when he is instructed after death. And, in proportion as man has little light, the evils which he commits are only in the exterior of the mind. They enter deeper and pierce the interiors of the mind according to the measure of truth which is known and is violated by committing them.

When these things are considered, we shall see no reason for regarding the colored people as more sinful than their masters, nor more sinful than the white people of the northern states.

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ABOLITIONIST *(Continued from page 24)*

We know not whether the white people of the southern states are really most enslaved by evil and false principles; and we see no reason for supposing that there is less of real slavery among the white people of any section of our country, than among the colored people. In looking at the moral condition of the two classes, it will not escape your notice that the love of dominion and avarice—the greatest of all evils, and the most internal and destructive—are little exercised among the slaves. These hereditary evils are kept quiescent under subjugation with them, somewhat as they are with children. They cannot rule and cannot hold property. And while these great evils are repressed, and prevented from coming forth as actual sins, there is some opportunity to implant remains by which the colored people can be saved. They have the means of acquiring remains of obedience; and these are among the most essential preparatives for spiritual life. These remains are very little cultivated among the white people of this country.

Many remains are also implanted especially in children by the exercise of gentle friendly affections. Of these there appear to be more among the colored people than among the whites. And it seldom appears that these remains are destroyed in adult ages. Remains of good use are not destroyed, except by living contrary to truth; and little truth is imparted to this people in the present life.

None of these remarks is designed to imply that it is proper to continue the present system of slavery. But, considering what real freedom and real slavery are, and what is the moral condition of the whites and of the blacks, we are not anxious nor desirous for the immediate emancipation of the colored people. If they were emancipated, they must derive their principles of religious and social life from the white people; and if the blind lead the blind, will they not both fall into the ditch?

It is true that many of the evils of slavery might be, and ought to be abated. The traffic in human beings is odious and abominable. The relation of husband and wife ought to be made sacred and inviolable. The Ten Commandments ought to be taught as the rules of life for masters and servants, and the observance of them should be enforced by precept and example.

The rigors of slavery might be greatly abated, with both moral and pecuniary advantage; and we hold it to be the duty of all men to urge the reformation.

It is also the duty of all to do what will tend most directly and effectually to give real freedom to all classes of men. The minds of the whites must be changed—essentially changed—before they will emancipate the slaves; and is it not obviously our duty to produce such a change as will give this freedom to the whites, that they may know how and be willing to give true freedom to the blacks?

And how can we best promote this object? By living according to the truths of the New Church, and imparting them to others. It is the descent of the New Jerusalem, and that alone, that can give man true freedom. The falsities which now prevail in all parts of our country make men real slaves. The truth alone can make men free.

Disseminating the truths of the New Church is all that we can do towards the proper abolition of slavery. And it is not sufficient to convince men of the simple truth that slavery is an evil; we must begin deeper; we must teach them that there is a God, and who He is; and that there is a heaven and a hell; and the Word is divine; and that keeping the commandments is salvation. Men generally have no true faith in any of these things; and until they have, it is idle, and worse than idle, to vex them with denunciations against particular sins, and with exhortations to reformation. The power to accomplish the

great work of emancipation is not in a few external truths; it is in the essential truths of religion, and in them alone. And any good that can be done by teaching minor truths will be limited to an abatement of some of the evils of slavery.

To those who are planning with zeal for immediate abolition, it will seem cold and discouraging to be told that true freedom can be obtained for the blacks, only by making Christians of the whites. We will therefore comfort them by saying that both good works will go on together. In proper times as the whites are made truly free from their present enslaving evils and falsities, they will communicate the true principles of freedom to the blacks.

We cannot say that there will not be some mighty convulsions which will separate the two races, and that the Lord will not provide other teachers for the colored people. But it is plain that we have nothing to do with such suppositions. Neither have we anything to do with the slaves, except through the medium of their masters. And, as all we do must be done with the masters, it becomes us to do what will tend most directly and effectively to establish in their minds those truths which are the only genuine principles of freedom. These are none other than the truths of the New Jerusalem.

Those who think much of the blessings of natural freedom, and are little concerned about spiritual freedom, may think it a great object to place the colored people on an equality with the whites, without regard to the spiritual consequences; that holding them in slavery is sin, and that we are bound to break off that sin immediately.

But we answer that all the obligation to give freedom to the slaves is obligation to give true freedom to make them free, in the sense in which the Scriptures use the term "free." To give them false freedom—to give them false principles which now prevail and set them loose like the whites to live according to them, and enslave themselves by them—is not required by any law of God. Nor are we required nor authorized to do anything to promote such emancipation. All our duty is limited to efforts for promoting genuine emancipation. It is not true that we are bound to promote obligation without regard to its quality and conditions.

Those who read the accounts of the effects of abolition in some of the West India Islands may become primed in their opinion that great good would result from general and immediate emancipation. The blacks are rapidly acquiring the religion, the intelligence, and the habits of the whites. Is this a blessing? It is the very curse we most of all deprecate. The change is already very great, and seems to be a blessing to those who are wholly in love with worldly life. But those who regard the spiritual consequences of these things see not less cause for weeping than for rejoicing.

It is not improbable that great commotions will still continue to occur in respect to this subject. It is hardly to be expected that the southern people will do anything more to release their slaves than they are first taught to do by fear. Fear is the beginning of wisdom. When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the people will learn justice. The Egyptians liberate not the Israelites till they have suffered a succession of plagues.

But we have nothing to do with these things. We must act from the love of saving—not of destroying. And let us take heed to apply first to ourselves the truth which makes free. First cast out the beam from our own eyes. Make it our first or main effort to apply the truth to ourselves, that we may be made truly free; for in that way only shall we become good medicines of the truth, which will make others free.

Larry Conant is a member of the Bridgewater church and assistant manager of the Central Office.

SSR Interim President Hired



Rev. Dr. George Sinclair

The Board of Trustees of the Swedenborg School of Religion is proud to announce the hiring of the Rev. Dr. George Sinclair as interim president.

George is a retired professor of church and ministry and director of field education at Andover Newton Theological School in Boston, but in his case "retired" is only a word. He continued to serve as an interim minister, is spending the first three months of 2000 in New Zealand and Australia traveling and serving on the Baptist World Alliance, and has a schedule full of presentations and workshops for several denominations.

Dr. Sinclair is a familiar figure to many Swedenborgian ministers as he has taught at SSR and provided ministerial seminars. He comes highly acclaimed and recommended by all who know him, and he has experience leading theological institutions through transition phases. He has served as acting academic dean twice, acting president, interim president, and interim pastor for fourteen different churches while a professor at ANTS. He says, "during the years, being an interim pastor has provided a reality check for what I was teaching in the classroom and in my work as director of field education." Sinclair will begin as interim president the first part of May with an overlap with Dr. Mary Kay Klein. He hopes to meet all of you at Convention 2000 in June.

—Jane Siebert, chair, Board of Trustees

A Funny Valentine from Iceland: Heart to Heart with Rotten Shark

Muff Worden

It's February, and folks' minds turn to Valentine's Day and celebrating friendships of the deeper sort, sending valentine cards to lovers and loved ones and secret someones, along with little cards to every other classmate and teacher. Do we do that in Iceland? It's not such a big thing here, but there ARE cards available, and folks DO send or give them. But we do other things, like eat rotten shark. WHAT??!!!!? What sort of crazy people would eat rotten shark???! Glad you asked!

Here we are, suddenly in the year 2000, and Iceland—which has Evangelical Lutheranism as its state religion—is celebrating its 1000th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity. There had been some Christians here before that. The first folks to settle in Iceland were, in fact, Celtic hermits known to posterity as the Papar, or followers of the pope. They were mainly on a small island, now called Papey (Pap = pope, ey = island), not far from where I live, off the southeast coast opposite the fishing town of Djupivogur. Then came the Vikings and Norse settlers, beginning in AD 874. These folks brought with them the old Norse calendar and the rites and rituals of the old Norse religion, along with the godar, or religious/spiritual leader of same. The godar were pretty much the leaders of a particular area (for each godi) of Iceland, in matters both religious and political.

There had been much debate about Christianity vs. the old religion that included the gods made famous by Wagner—Odin/Wotan, Thor, Loki, Freyja, and so on. The decision was left to the chief Godi whose territory was in the northeast quadrant, and who was pretty much the highest authority in Iceland. And so it was in AD 1000 that he decided that Christianity had much to offer, including a good philosophy, and he came with his armful of idols to throw them into the beautiful waterfall that has been known since as Godafoss, or waterfall of the Godi, right beside the Ring Road where it crosses the big glacier river Skjalfandafljot. (You can put this on your list of sights to stop at when you come visit this amazing land).

And what about the rotten shark, you ask? Stay tuned. The old months went from moon to moon, as they did with the Native Americans, Celts, and lots of others who were tuned in to the earth and its surroundings. In Iceland, the calendar in those pre-Christianity days included the month of Thorri which spans the current calendar from mid-January to mid-February. And February, as you know, is the month when a whole lot of folks who live in the north—New England, the northern border states, Canada, and Iceland—get really tired of winter and are ready for a change. They begin to hate snow, sleet, hail, wind, ice, thaw, cold, scraping windshields in the morning, frozen laundry on the line, cold noses, you name it. They long for something green, like leaves on trees and grass in yards and pastures.

So far greater in Iceland than Valentine's day is Thorrablot. This is the annual celebration of the fact that spring is coming soon, that the sun will soon shine directly into fjord towns from which it has been absent since the end of October, and it is a great excuse for the whole town (every town and city around Iceland does this) to get together for yet another feast and dance, one of Iceland's favorite activities. And since it is in Thorri, the old month, it makes perfect sense to have the fun and pleasure of indulging in a feast of the old foods, while the committee for the event—handpicked by the previous year's committee and having met at least once a month during the entire year, and then almost daily since January 1—puts on hilarious skits and running jokes having to do with events and people prominent in the town in the last year, interspersed with everyone singing favorite old songs at the tops of their lungs, hooking elbows along the long strings of

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Eldborg (fire hill) in Hnappadal county in western Iceland. This is an explosion crater from many eons ago.

A Funny Valentine from Iceland:

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banquet tables and swinging side to side the whole while.

One favorite song that is always sung at Thorrablot in Seydisfjörður is "Loan er komin," or "The loa is coming." The loa is the plover, a migratory bird, and its return to the area is one of the first signs of spring. Whistle along—the tune to this famous old Icelandic song is "Carry me back to ole Virginny." I happen to be on the committee this year, and this winter we're working to be ready with the best-ever hilarious skits and songs for this year's gathering on January 29th.

But...the Shark, the SHARK!!! Yes, yes—coming to that. For the feast, the hotel caters the occasion by having on each table plates of soft flatbread and dark, molassesey rye bread and lots of butter. Then platters of the old foods: dried fish, roast sheep's head, pickled ram's testicles, herring in many forms, smoked salmon, smoked mutton, and—you guessed it—rotten shark. Finger food.

You can imagine most of the above, but the shark—well, first you catch it, then you clean it, then you hang it outside for a few days to dry, then you bury it in the sand for a decent length of time until it starts to decompose and pickles itself and develops its characteristic and enticing (yuk) ammoniac aroma. Then you dig it up, fillet it and cut it into small pieces and serve it up on breads or crackers. The hardest part about eating it is getting past the odor. The next hardest for me is managing to chew something that feels like soft rubber—I don't like rubbery things in my mouth. But one has to try new things, so I first tried the shark at my first Thorrablot in 1998, and it wasn't really all that bad, amazingly enough.

I am glad it is only served once a year, however, and then in tiny doses. But it is a wonderful source of conversation and hilarity all year among Icelanders, particularly when they can enjoy telling a visiting foreigner about it and the other old foods. Sometimes whale blubber was served (before the ban on whaling), and while the consistency was about the same, the aroma and taste were quite different. I do like the dried fish (hardfisk), usually cod or haddock, and have that as a snack quite often. My cats also love it, so I have to share.

And then there is the regular dinner, of course, so that you don't go hungry. And dinner is followed by amazing desserts with lots of whipped cream. Dairy products here are many and marvelous, and there is even one of my morning favorites, skyr, which is like a thicker, creamier, tastier yogurt but with no calories! But the all-time favorite, used the most, is whipped cream. Piles of it, mostly unsweetened, and used on and in cakes, pies, tarts, pancakes, waffles—anything. You wouldn't believe how much is used until you came to Iceland and indulged in a dessert buffet or "big" occasion.

And speaking of pancakes, I will end with the second February celebration that takes precedence over Valentine's day. This is solarkaffi, or sun coffee, and it happens all over Iceland, but happens in this fjord beginning about February 14th and the week following. This tradition is that when the sun first peeps over the southern peaks and shines directly into your house for the first time since October, you celebrate by having open house with coffee and pancakes (crepes, really). You make the plate-sized crepes, then in the middle

spread a nice thick layer of whipped cream (of course) and on it put a dollop of rhubarb jam. Then you fold the pancake in half, then in half again so you have a wedge-shaped goodie with a thick pointed end where the cream and jam are concentrated. You make lots of these, and make lots of coffee which you keep hot in the ubiquitous thermoses, and feed them to your friends and family as they come in.

Everyone has solarkaffi during the week, including businesses, the old folks' home part of the hospital and the school, and the women's auxiliary of the rescue squad makes huge batches of pancakes to sell by the dozen as a fundraiser, packing them in boxes marked "Icelandic fish" provided by the fish plants in town. By the end of the week your sugar high is at full strength as is your enjoyment of having the sun shine directly and warmly onto your face as you walk around town. And you can't stand the thought of one more pancake or the sight of whipped cream. Until the next feast or dessert buffet or major occasion, of course.

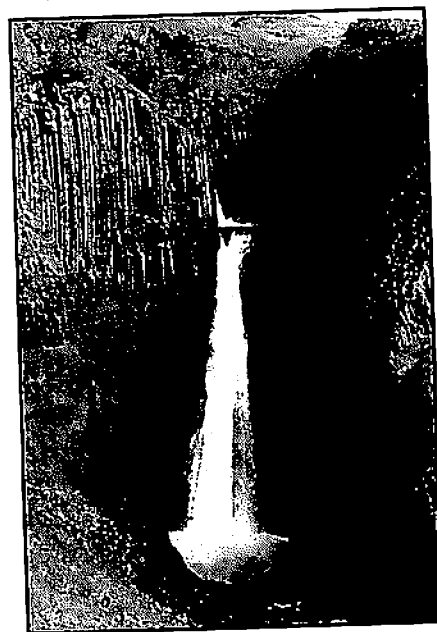
And by this time in February, the solstice having happened in December, the days are nicely bright and long again, and getting ever longer and with increased energy levels in every person and animal, as we push on toward spring and the sun rises higher in the sky and beams its warmth earthward. It is suddenly a great month, with promise of a great summer, although the snows will continue for two or three more months.

So that's what we do here in the north when most of you are celebrating Valentine's day. I know that on Valentine's day weekend there will be a wondrous gathering of folk musicians in Maine, doing their celebrating by playing lots of music and having a great time of visiting and sharing and sledding and walking and eating. But you might try the idea of solar kaffi around that time, on a day when it is cold and snowy out, but the sun is shining warmly into your windows. Just make a pot of coffee (or tea), and make big thin pancakes—and either fill them with unsweetened whipped cream and a dollop of rhubarb or a fruit jam and fold them as noted, or sprinkle them lightly with cinnamon sugar and roll them up into long tubes and serve them that way, cold. Then toast the coming spring with your cup of coffee (or tea), and enjoy sharing this Icelandic tradition.

Ethelwyn (Muff) Worden is a lifelong Swedenborgian, professional musician, and former director of the Central Office. She has been living in Iceland for three years.



Photo: Litlanesfoss (little peninsula waterfall) and basaltic columns, in the largest stretch of old Icelandic National Forest near Hallormstadir, on the large glacial Lagarfljót River in East Iceland.



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Back Page Explanation Good PR

Dear Ms. LeVan,

Since my daughter, Susannah Currie, first became active in the Swedenborgian church in Portland, Maine, I have been at a loss to explain her career to our friends.

Once we subscribed to *The Messenger* I found a brief boxed explanation of the church and its founding which I copied and have kept in my wallet to pass out.

Once I met a woman from Seattle who was involved in a discussion group of comparative religions. She hadn't heard of Swedenborg, so I passed on my clipping and suggested her group include it in their talks. And I know there is an active church in Seattle!

Also answering my doorbell I told Jehovah's Witnesses that my daughter was a Swedenborgian minister, and they asked if it was a Christian religion! There is a great need to let people know you exist.

My main reason for writing is to ask that you find a way to change the layout of the back page so that it is feasible to xerox the explanation that is now in a long narrow column. You might also suggest that others carry it around as a quick way to explain yourselves to others. Maybe even expand it.

I look forward to receiving my copies of *The Messenger* and keeping informed on what's happening in the church community.

Sincerely,
Melissa E. Barbeau
Barrington, Rhode Island



Above: Pool and bridge in the botanical garden in Akureyri, the main city of northern Iceland

TO THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Third Millennium

Trevor Woofenden

An open letter to Steve Koke—
When opinion is stated as fact, I get uncomfortable.

In "Millennium Madness" (*Messenger* 12/99), you say the current millennium doesn't actually end for another year. We're celebrating "too soon," you say. You even went so far as to notify various prestigious institutions of this "fact"...and were dismissed, pooh-poohed, and brushed off by all of them.

This issue has been debated every turn of the century since at least the 1690s. So I'm really surprised to hear that you have the definitive answer and are willing to chastise us so thoroughly.

In his essay "Dousing Diminutive Dennis's Debate (or DDDD = 2000)", geologist Stephen Jay Gould comments: "When do centuries end?—at the termination of years marked '99 (as common sensibility suggests), or at the close of years marked '00 (as the narrow logic of a peculiar system dictates)?" He goes on to carefully point out that the issue cannot be resolved since both positions are opinion.

The "logical" position is based on arithmetic: the first year was Year 1. Add 999 years and you get Year 1000 as the final year of the millennium. The next millennium begins with 1001. It's basic math.

The "common sensibility" position sees four digits changing from 1999 to 2000 which, as Gould puts it, "invokes issues of aesthetics and feeling, rather than logical reasoning." In other words: It's obvious.

Gould lays the problem in the lap of the inventor of our dating system, Dionysius Exiguus (Dennis the Short): "The problem of centuries arises from Dennis's unfortunate decision to start

with year one, rather than year zero—and for no other reason. ...If our shortsighted monk had only begun with a year zero, then logic and sensibility would coincide, and the wild millennial bells could ring forth but once and resoundingly at the beginning of January 1, 2000. But he didn't."

In Dionysius's system, Christ's birth began 1 A.D. (Anno Domini = year of our Lord), and the year before Christ's birth is 1 B.C. (Before Christ). There is no Year Zero in between. This creates a few mathematical problems. For instance, from 1.5 B.C. to 1.5 A.D. is only two years, not three. Every mathematician knows that the whole numbers go: ...-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, etc. So, the first year of Christ's life logically should have been called 0 A.D. It's the difference between counting the current year and counting how many years have been completed so far. (I'm in my 44th year of life, but I'm only 43 years old.) When Jesus turned 1 year old, the calendar changed to 2. And the calendar has been a year ahead of Christ ever since.

Steve, you base your entire position on the premise that calendar millennia have to end with "00" because the first one started with "01." And I easily disagree with your position because I disagree with your premise. We don't have to continue to do it that way just because of some sixth century monk's arbitrary decision.

Instead of trying to buck the tide of millennium madness by "logically" insisting on another year of the 20th century now, it makes much more sense to me to put that troublesome extra year two thousand years ago at 0 A.D. where it more logically belongs, starting the first millennium with the Year Zero, so we don't have to be forever stuck with some goofy system that wants to delay the celebration until 365 days after the calendar year changes three, or in this case, four (!) digits in one day!

(Besides, everybody knows our calendar is late by 4 years and 8 days: the REAL turn of the millennium was December 25, 1996.)

Trevor Woofenden lives in western Massachusetts and wishes the Strict Constructionists would ease up a bit so that the rest of us can relax and enjoy every bit of the NEW new millennium.



WOW! WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY!!

Summer, 2000, In Purley Chase, England!!
July 29 - August 5, 2000

Two Swedenborgian Youth, Ages 18,
19, or 20

This next summer, the British New Church Federation is sponsoring "Camp 2000" which is your invitation to a week of Millennium celebration for the young people of the Lord's worldwide New Church. Convention would like to sponsor two representatives to this very special gathering.

Any interested Swedenborgian young adults can apply for these two positions by submitting two pieces of information to Central Office. One will be a letter from a minister or a lay person attesting to the young person's ability to represent the Church and to be a valuable, contributing member to this gathering of young adults who belong to the New Church. The second piece of information will be an essay (you know, that five-paragraph thing...) submitted to Central Office by each interested

candidate in which the writer will explain the contribution that he or she can make to this international camp, the Swedenborgian background he or she has, and the things that he or she feels will be gained from this opportunity.

Both the recommendation and the essay will be read by a committee of three (two lay people and one ordained minister of the Swedenborgian Church) who will receive these pieces of information from the Central Office with all names removed and numerical designations assigned. This will be a "blind essay" and a "blind recommendation" structure. Ratings from the readers will be returned to Central Office, and the results will be forwarded to Chris Laitner, vice-president of Convention. Based on the ratings assigned, two young adults will be selected to be sent as fully sponsored representatives of Convention to the "Camp 2000" held at Purley Chase, England, July 29 - August 5, 2000.

The organizers of this event (sponsored by the British New Church

Federation) have many exciting activities planned which include thoughtful interaction, travel and sightseeing, social occasions, and other experiences. It will be a rewarding experience!

Time limit: SOON!!! The deadline for submission of essays and accompanying letters of recommendation is March 29, 2000. Your written pieces must be postmarked no later than midnight of that date.

Interested?

The Convention of Swedenborgian Churches in North America wants to sponsor you! Submit the winning combination of recommendation and essay, and you will find your way paid to this marvelous summer experience. We want to send TWO young adults, so get your information NOW!!! Send the essay and the recommendation to Central Office, 11 Highland Avenue, Newtonville, MA 02460.

**GO FOR IT!!! WANT TO TRAVEL?
MEET NEW PEOPLE?
GIVE THIS A TRY!!** 

STUDENTS RETURN FROM GHANA

Back in the early 1970s the Swedenborg Foundation was so intrigued by the great demand for Swedenborg literature from Ghana they sent Dr. S. Synnestvedt to check out the scene. Dr. Synnestvedt's findings so impressed the young Peace Corps volunteer, Jeremy Simons, that he went to Ghana. It was around Jeremy's second visit to Ghana that five children were born in the USA. Anna Woofenden, Athena Childs, Sasha Silverman, Jeremy Henry, and in Ghana Francis Darkwah. Well, they are grown up college students now, and they just spent more than two months in Ghana promoting the cause of the New Church. Their report has inspired many people, and we seem to be witnessing good momentum in West Africa all these years after the Foundation sent the first books.

GHANA


Five students from the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church spent more than two months in Ghana. The students, Athena Childs, Francis Darkwah, Jeremy Henry, Sasha Silverman, and Anna Woofenden, have returned with an inspiring message of hope about the health of the New Church among the people in Ghana. On December 3rd, 1999, they gave an excellent presentation to a delighted Bryn Athyn audience.

Their mission statement is as follows:

We know that the Lord leads us in every moment, and we all feel incredibly blessed that the stream of His Providence has led us toward this exciting opportunity in Ghana, Africa. We anxiously desire to use this trip to serve the Lord's kingdom both on the earth as

well as in our hearts. As a group we will do our best to promote the growth and prosperity of the Ghanaian church and elementary school by contributing our time, love and energy. We pray that our endeavors—blessed by the Lord—will serve to enhance and strengthen the New Church.

We look forward to living in an environment in which the Lord has primary focus, and we embrace this opportunity to trust the Lord completely, for we recognize that many challenges await us. Ultimately we each hope to achieve a greater understanding of ourselves, of our home, and of the Lord's vast kingdom. For surely, the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns!

—Rev. Donald Rose
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania 


Words From the Soul:

(Continued from page 20)

⁴ Wilson Van Dusen, *Returning to the Source: The Way to the Experience of God*. (Moab, Utah: Real People Press, 1996), 3.

⁵ Stanislav Grof, "East and West: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 15, #1, 1983. As found on web site: <http://www.atpweb.org/perspective/quotes.html>.

⁶ Van Dusen, *The Presence of Other Worlds*, 212.

The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is a professor at the Swedenborg School of Religion and author of Wings and Roots: The New Age and Emanuel Swedenborg in Dialog, published by J. Appleseed and Co. 

Temenos Spring Programs APRIL-MAY

APRIL

MANDALA WORKSHOP

Laurie Pierce Lincoln
Saturday, April 1, 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.

EXPLORING THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS OF RELIGION: Tibetan Buddhism

Linda Roman
Sunday, April 2, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

GETTING THE PICTURE

Lorraine Sando
Friday, April 7, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

MY FAMILY, MYSELF: Healing from Dysfunctional Family Patterns

Lorraine Sando
Friday, April 7, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.
Saturday, April 8 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

HEALING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY - Creative Expression: Music, Art, and Movement

Lynn Miller
Sunday, April 9, 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT

Sunday, April 9, 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

MINDFULNESS GROUP MEDITATION

Nancy Mattila
Wednesday, April 12, 7:15 to 9:00 p.m.

USING PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN WRITING ABOUT SPIRITUALITY

Grant Schnarr
Saturday, April 15, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Wings and Roots:

(Continued from back page)

hesitate to identify themselves with the New Age or with traditional Christianity. If I were attracted by a spiritual topic, but learned that it was to be presented at a Pentecostal church, I would probably decline to attend. If a closet new-ager was intrigued by a talk on angels, but read that it was to be held in a Church, he might very well decide not to risk attending.


In a well-written book of 111 pages plus notes, bibliography, and index, Wilma Wake has provided us with an attractive presentation of the New Age, the Swedenborgian view of reality and spiritual growth, and historical ties between the two movements. Special attention is given to the rise of spiritualism in the mid and late 1800s and the reaction of the Swedenborgian Church. I would like to have seen attention given to the impact of near-death experiences in the latter half of the 20th century, as reported and studied by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Raymond Moody, and Kenneth Ring. Another pioneer is the astronaut Edgar Mitchell, who founded and developed IONS (the Institute of Noetic Sciences, exploring the frontiers of consciousness.)

Wings and Roots is published by J. Appleseed & Co., under the auspices of the Swedenborgian Church. The challenge will be to reach readers in the

church and within the broad New Age movement. As an experiment, five copies will be featured on the bookshelves of the Stonehouse Bookstore, operated by the Swedenborgian Spiritual Growth Center. The store is no longer advertised as "new age," but we presume that the majority of customers are in this category. Will these customers be attracted by a book that relates Swedenborg and the New Age? And will Swedenborgian Church members, who come to the Stonehouse for worship be intrigued to buy copies of *Wings and Roots*? Although the two groups have a number of common interests, there is a degree of mutual suspicion which has to be overcome.

Wilma Wake concludes on an optimistic note: "If both New Agers and Swedenborgians can agree on a common goal for the twenty-first century of a New Mysticism that involves seeking experience of, and relationship with, God, then significant dialog can ensue as we strive to articulate those experiences and share them with each other."

The Rev. Ernest O. Martin is founder of the Temenos Retreat Center, and assistant to the director of the Stonehouse Growth Center in Kirkland, Washington.

To order, write or call J. Appleseed & Co.,
3200 Washington Street
San Francisco, CA 94121
(415) 346-6466
Fax: (415) 474-0172
e-mail: jfl@dnai.com 

REIKI PRACTITIONER SUPPORT

Nancy Mattila
Wednesday, April 26, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK:

An Introductory Lecture
Laurie Weaver
Friday, April 28, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

SOUL'S JOURNEY - FIRE'S BREATH

Laurie Weaver
Saturday, April 29, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
and Sunday, April 30, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

HEALING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY - Healing our Relationships

Walt Ciecko
Sunday, April 30, 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

MAY

RITUAL FOR HEALING GRIEFS OF BIRTHING

Kayta Gajdos
Sunday, May 7, 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.

MINDFULNESS GROUP MEDITATION

Nancy Mattila
Wednesday, May 10, 7:15 to 9:00 p.m.

CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT

Sunday, May 21, 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

REIKI PRACTITIONER SUPPORT

Nancy Mattila
Wednesday, May 24, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

for more information contact


Temenos Retreat Center

1564 Telegraph Road

West Chester, PA 19382

phone 610-696-8145

fax 610-696-7335

e-mail information@temenosretreat.org
website www.temenosretreat.org 

PASSAGES

Confirmation

Soukup—Mary Soukup was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church December 19, 1999, at the Cleveland, Ohio Swedenborg Chapel, the Rev. Eric Hoffmann officiating.

Death

Swanton—John Reed Swanton, Jr., 91, entered the spiritual world January 6, 2000, in Brunswick Maine. He was the son of the late Dr. John R. Swanton, lifelong Swedenborgian and Ethnologist at the Smithsonian Institution, and Alice Barnard Swanton. John Jr. was raised in the New Church and was a charter member of the Fryeburg Flames (FNCA youth group) and attended the 1998 session as a sort of anniversary of the original Flames. Throughout the years his work as a civil and mechanical engineer was awarded more than ten U.S. Patents. He is survived by five children, 18 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at a later date.



Church Family News

The Rev. Dr. Bill Woofenden writes, "We wish to express our heartfelt thanks for the amazing outpouring of concern, sympathy, and prayers for Louise following her stroke. She is making slow but steady progress in regaining her speech, reading and writing. We are grateful to all our friends from all over the world." ✠

Temenos Discount for Church Members

The Temenos Conference and Retreat Center, a ministry of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, announces discounts for Swedenborgian Church members. Temenos offers church members a \$5 per night discount off the regular room rates. Please call and inquire about availability of dates. Do you have a family reunion coming up? Are you traveling to the East Coast anytime soon? Come and visit Temenos! We also offer a midweek discount for nonprofit groups of \$10 per night for 2 or more nights. Consider us for your next committee meeting. ✠

Bylaw Changes

General Council recommends the replacement of the present bylaw, Article 19, with the following: The Board of Trustees of the National Church, now holding the title to and having control of the Church property in Washington, D.C., shall consist of fifteen members. The thirteen members of the General Council shall be Trustees by virtue of that office. The Washington Society shall elect two remaining members annually. The position on the Board of any member of General Council who is not a citizen of the United States shall be filled by a vote of General Council.

There shall be an Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees consisting of the officers of Convention plus two additional Board members, elected by the Board, only one of whom may be from the Washington Society. Ten members shall constitute a quorum. An extraordinary meeting may be called, with appropriate notice, by the Chair in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

General Council recommends the following change in Article X, Section 2 of the bylaws: This Support Unit (Education Support Unit) shall consist of three members plus a representative appointed by the Swedenborg School of Religion's Board of Trustees.

—Gloria Toot, secretary ✠

Important Church Calendar Dates

Feb. 5-7	SSR Board San Francisco	May 5-6	Wayfarers Chapel Board Palos Verdes, CA
Feb. 24-27	MINSU Ft. Myers Beach, FL	May 17-19	COMSU Temenos
Mar. 6	SSR Site Selection Committee Andover-Newton: Newton, MA	Jun. 25-Jul. 2	Convention 2000 Urbana U. Ohio
Feb. 13-15	Workshop for retreat center administrators Temenos	Aug 24-27	MINSU TBA
Mar. 28-30	CAM Newton	Sep 20-21	FPRSU Almont
Apr. 6-9	EDSU Temenos	Sep 22-24	Cabinet Almont
Apr. 28-May 1	General Council/ SSR/CAM Joint Meeting Temenos	Oct 13-14	Wayfarers Chapel Board Palos Verdes, CA
		Oct 19-22	General Council Temenos
		Sep. 26-28	SSR Board Newton

Song Suggestions Wanted

The Council of Ministers Committee on Worship is in the process of compiling a new songbook for worship. The Committee is still considering songs for inclusion and invites you to send your suggestions by March 15th to the Rev. Susannah Currie at the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, 685 Broad Run Road, West Chester, PA 19382.

Wings and Roots: The New Age and Emanuel Swedenborg in Dialog

By Wilma Wake, J. Appleseed & Co.,
San Francisco, CA 1999, \$12.

Reviewed by Erni Martin

Through her life and ministry, the Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is seeking to integrate New Age concepts with her grounding in Swedenborgianism. As a student of history, and a faculty member of the Swedenborg School of Religion, she is uniquely qualified to pursue this dialog. Describing her experience in New Age spirituality, she said: "I was soaring with wings into parts unknown!" As she became a part of the Christian Church, and gained ordination in the Swedenborgian Church, she found roots for her wings. She is convinced that the New Age can be like colorful butterfly wings soaring through the air, while the teachings and traditions of Swedenborgianism can be solid roots grounding New Age ideas and principles.

Scholars of New Age history take for granted that Emanuel Swedenborg was a major force in the development of today's New Age. Few of the participants in the movement are aware of this impact, and few Swedenborgians are familiar with the various expressions of the New Age. If this gulf between the New Age and the Swedenborgian Church is wide and deep, how can any dialog take place?

At its convention session in 1986, the Swedenborgian Church adopted a new statement of purpose along with nine objectives. Objective six declares: "Clarify and intensify our participation in

and contribution to the Lord's New Age." Under this objective are six strategies, including "D. Encourage and support involvement in New Age activities," and "E. Encourage the participation of 'New Age' persons in Convention events and programming."

Wings and Roots describes some of the efforts being made to carry out the sixth objective, particularly the Temenos Retreat Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania; the Stonehouse

Bookstore and Growth Center in Kirkland, Washington; the Chrysalis Retreat Center in DeLand, Florida; and the Network Center for Spirituality in Concord, New Hampshire. The church denomination also sponsored the attendance of Paul Martin, of the Stonehouse, at an international conference of New Age leaders in Findhorn, Scotland.

There are many factors which tend to impede the dialog between Swedenborg and the New Age. A growing number of people are turning away from the "New Age" label, assured by the media that the term denotes all kinds of quackery and is meaningless. Bookstores, magazines, and newspapers that used to refer to themselves as "new age" have changed their names and advertising. *The New Times* of Seattle used to announce that it was a resource for the New Age community. Now their masthead says: "Your monthly resource for authentic living." *The New Age* magazine describes itself as "The Journal for Holistic Living."

Because of excesses of right-wing religious groups and fundamentalist churches, the words, "Christian" and "Church" have become an embarrassment to many. The terms "New Age" and the "Christian Church" have become so broad as to be almost meaningless. Many Swedenborgians

(Continued on page 30)



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of North America
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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.