

THE MESSENGER

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Cheerio: Visiting New Church College In England

Ron Brugler and Wilma Wake

As we each spent over six hours on our respective flights to Manchester, England (Ron from Toronto and Wilma from Boston), our excitement mounted about our upcoming visit to The New Church College, the seminary of the British Conference. We were thrilled when the invitation arrived from their principal, the Rev. John Presland (Presland is the equivalent of our seminary president). They were hosting a conference to evaluate their new "Dispersed Education" format that has now been in place for three years, and invited representatives of other Swedenborgian groups to attend. We represented Convention and SSR.

We groggily greeted each other and John Presland at the Manchester airport mid-morning on Friday, the 5th of November (the middle of the night for our North American bodies). But John's cheery greeting kept us awake and alert for hours. He provided a detailed commentary as we were driven from the airport to the college. We learned that Manchester was once the home of the British textile industry, and we crossed a canal where, years ago, cotton from the American South made its way to Manchester from Liverpool. We also managed to control our terror of being hit by oncoming cars since everyone was driving on the "wrong" side of the motorway!

We were delighted to see the charming college, which is located in Radcliffe, just north of Manchester. It is a stately

Every course offered by the College is being put into a module format for dispersed learning. To date, there are 14 such modules, with a goal of having over 40 in place within the next few years.

but homey building—similar to the former SSR quarters at 48 Sargent St., but much smaller. There are five guest rooms that were formerly student studies. The building also houses a lecture room, a library where librarian Marian Kidd works, offices for Administrator

Anne Cansell and Principal John Presland, a sitting room, and a kitchen/dining room where the House Manageress Glenneyce Eckersley provides lunch, tea, cooks for



(From left) The Revs. Mary Duckworth, Wilma Wake, and Ron Brugler, communion service at New Church College.

guests, and maintains the house. In her spare time she writes popular books on angels and coincidences! (Her books include *Angel on My Shoulder*, *Out of the Blue*, and *Children and Angels*. Copies were donated to the SSR library).

Not long after we arrived at New Church College, a loud bell rang throughout the building, and everyone gathered in the sitting room. It was tea time. We felt a bit foreign as Ron preferred coffee and Wilma took her tea black (it is commonly served with milk in England), but generally we felt very much at home in this delightful institution. The entire time we were there, a bell rang every weekday midmorning and midafternoon.

Everyone quit work together. (In the States, coffee breaks are more often done alone or in pairs. In England, it seemed far more common for everyone to break together). Tea, of course, was not a stale tea bag in a cup of tepid water, but a pot of freshly brewed tea from rapidly boiling water. Wilma, lifelong tea lover, filled her suitcase with English tea bags before leaving!

John encouraged us to nap Friday afternoon, after which we had a delightful dinner at his home with his wife Margaret, daughter Alison, and New Church College student Esther Bryne who lives in Scotland but was staying with us at the College for the seminar.

The next few days were a magical blur of sightseeing and meeting people that left us in love with Britain forever. John and Margaret took us on a day-long walk with friends of theirs in the Derbyshire National Park. It was a sunny crisp fall day, and we trekked across hills, by waterfalls, across streams, through small hamlets, and passed fields of grazing sheep. Of course, afterwards we stopped at a pub in Monsellhead for cups of steaming tea in front of a roaring fire.

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The Church: Past, Present, Future

Paul Zacharias

I thought *Messenger* readers might be interested in the ideas expressed in a recent sermon I delivered at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario. The Scripture readings were the garden stories from the first and last chapters in the Bible. So, this is a peek at the past, present, and future of the Christian Church in the western world.

One thousand years ago Europe was emerging out of the Dark Ages, which lasted about five centuries. At that time the Roman Catholic Church prescribed and controlled pretty well every facet of life. In 1054 the Great Schism occurred, which essentially divided the Church into East and West. The Crusades began in 1095, and these continued for about 200 years, at tragic cost. The Christians were trying to retake Jerusalem from the Muslims; a failed effort. In the 12th and 13th centuries we see the first serious attempts to reform the Catholic Church from within. St. Francis, and others, established orders that tried to duplicate the winning ways of the Early Church. Around this time the great cathedrals were being built all over Europe, their vaulted ceilings a testament to the glory of God. This was also a time of increasing tension between the popes and the kings, resulting in the increasing importance of the nation states. But for the average person in Europe, life was short, hard, and brutish.

In 1348-9, the black plague swept over the face of Europe, killing about one-third of the population. And the people said that God sent the plague to punish them for their sins. This was the prevailing view: that God was judgmental and vindictive, a God to be feared. Gutenberg printed the Bible in 1455, and this really opened up the floodgates—religious tracts and books poured off the printing presses. (Recently a panel of experts selected Gutenberg as the single most influential figure in the world over the last millennium.) In 1517 Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on

the Wittenberg Chapel door, which quickly led to the Protestant Reformation. In the next two centuries dozens of Protestant sects and institutions were founded, by leaders like Hus, Knox, Calvin, Menno, and many others.

Most church scholars would agree that by 1700 the state of the Christian Church in Europe had fallen to a very low ebb. The Catholic Church was seen to be essentially external and corrupt in its practices. The core teaching in the Protestant movement was "faith alone," which meant, very simply, that if you believed that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross, you were washed clean of your sins and would be assured of eternal salvation. This was, and is, bad theology. Swedenborg arrived on the scene at this time when a divine revelation was desperately needed in the world. His many religious writings, published between 1743-72, gave to humankind a new, fresh understanding of Christian theology. His writings open up the depths of the Bible; they show us how life is to be lived; they give us the nature of spirit and the spiritual world; they satisfy the yearnings of both mind and heart; and most importantly, this is all based on a God who is perfect love, wisdom, and purpose, known to us most fully in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

This was the Age of Enlightenment, the Age of Reason. There was an incredible explosion of freedom of thought; scientific knowledge grew rapidly, as did trade and commerce. The revolutions in France and America took place. There was a growing secular view of life, espoused by Voltaire and others. More and more people were thinking for themselves. This was also the period of great missionary endeavors. One Portuguese sailing captain, with missionaries on board, wrote in his journal: "We went to India to serve God and His Majesty, to bring light to those who are in darkness, and to grow rich, as all men desire to do."

In the 19th century the ideas of Darwin, Freud, and Marx thoroughly shook the foundations of the Christian world. At this time Bible scholars were

asking hard questions as to how and why the Bible was written. But by 1900 Europe and North America were still regarded as Christian nations, essentially based on Christian values and beliefs. The first half of this century saw two world wars and the Great Depression, which ushered in a very liberal and rapidly expanding decade in the 1950s. Our denomination built five new churches in that heady era. Billy Graham was convinced that the entire world would be Christian by 2000. Everything changed during and after the 1960s. That was a watershed decade, so far as the organized church is concerned. It's been downhill ever since, with the church losing influence and members; the reasons for this are many and varied.

I began my training for the ministry in 1948, and I've seen enormous changes in the numbers, the vitality, the role, and the public perception of the Christian Church in general, and of our own Church in particular. In 1950, in Canada, 60% of the people were actively

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Cheerio: Visiting New Church College In England *(Continued from cover)*

On Sunday, John drove Ron, Wilma, and Esther to the Bradford New Church where we, Ron and Wilma, led the service. We walked in the door on a chilly morning to be greeted by cups of hot tea and coffee. The congregation couldn't have been more gracious and welcoming to us, and we were later treated to lunch in a pub where we had a chance to experience our first Yorkshire pudding. This was a bit challenging for Wilma, since the pudding is generally served with meat gravy, but John managed to arrange for a vegetarian version. Afterwards, John dropped us off in Haworth to spend a few minutes looking around the town where the Bronte family had lived, and visiting the gift shops. He expected to meet us in about 20 minutes, but it was about two hours before he could drag us away. We were thrilled to see the parsonage where the Bronte sisters had lived (their father was a priest in the Church of England). The village is an Old-English town of narrow cobblestone streets.

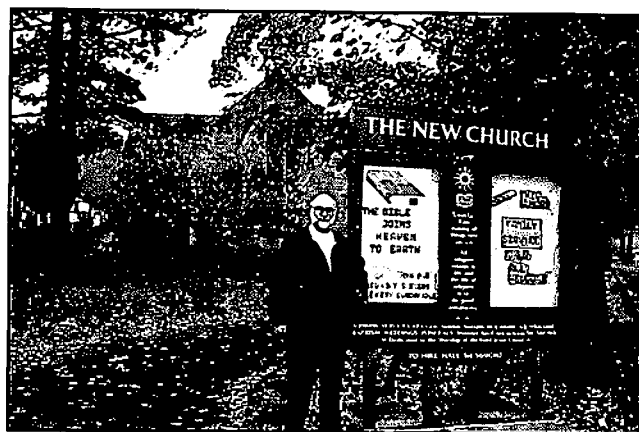
We were also shown some other New Church buildings in the area: the Kildwick New Church Centre next to the White Lion Pub where we lunched, used for youth retreats, and the Keighley New Church, one of the largest New Church parishes in the country.

On Monday we got to work. We spent the day perusing the study materials of the College and preparing for the conference to begin on Tuesday—and learning a great deal about New Church College!

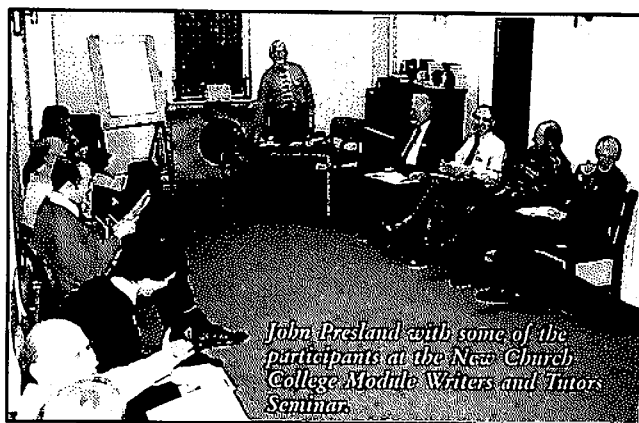
About four years ago they made the decision to move from the model of having resident seminary students to one of dispersed learning. This new model is one in which new students study and learn at home, and augment their individual study in tutorial sessions that often include other students. At this point the learning groups are gathering in London, Bournemouth, Birmingham, Yorkshire, and Scotland. There is also a Moscow group. The reborn Australian New Church College, headed by the Rev. Ian Arnold, the former principal of the British College, also draws extensively from the New Church College modules. About 50 students have now studied one or more of the new modules. In the former residential program, the student population was generally five or less!

Every course offered by the College is being put into a modular format for dispersed learning. To date, there are about 20 such modules, with a goal of having over 40 in place within the next few years. Each module includes eight or sixteen written lessons that require students to read, reflect, and answer a series of questions about the material. Then students meet fortnightly for several hours to cover two lessons with a tutor who is responsible to the College. The tutorial is designed to help students understand and absorb the material contained in the lesson. (It is not, say, a lecture from the tutor or a rambling discussion between tutor and student.) At this point materials are mailed to each student, since use of the Internet has yet to be developed. The areas of study are divided broadly into four categories: New Church Doctrine, Biblical Study, Sharing One's Faith, and Applied Theology.

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Ron Brugler at Bradford New Church Sunday, November 7th, 1999 where he preached and conducted service with Wilma.



John Presland with some of the participants at the New Church College Module Writers and Tutors Seminar.

Right: Glenmyce Eckersley, house manageress at NCC with her latest book, Children and Angels and Anne Consell, NCC administrator in kitchen of NCC.



Left: The three sponsored students at NCC (l to r) Rita Russell, sponsored by NCC; Mrs. Gill Gordon, sponsored student of the General Conference of the New Church; Esther Bryne, sponsored student of the General Conference.

Right: Wilma Wake and NCC student Esther Bryne at the Lion Inn Pub in Yorkshire. Wilma is having her first [vegetarian] Yorkshire pudding.



Cheerio: Visiting New Church College In England

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There are a number of options for programs of study through the New Church college. They offer some modules for group study, and some introductory modules for individuals who just want to learn more about the Swedenborgian faith. They have a program for worship leaders which is comparable to our lay leader program. The British Conference has a CAM, but theirs is the Committee for Auxiliary Ministry. It works with worship leaders (who are not ordained but can receive accreditation as a "Recognized Worship Leader"). The main focus, however, remains a program that leads to ordination into the ministry. We were also interested to learn that the Conference some years ago established two levels of ordained ministry, with the newer one being an "Assistant Minister." This category encompasses all of the rights and privileges of the traditional ordained minister, including the administration of the sacraments. The requirements, however, involve an advanced certificate from the College rather than a diploma. The certificate requires the student to complete two levels of training; the diploma requires three levels, but to date, no students have completed this third level under the dispersed education program.

Each of the three levels of the College program represents the equivalent of a year of full-time study. Each level consists of six modules, equivalent to 192 lessons with an average of about seven hours per week per module. So, to complete a level in one 32-week academic year, a student needs to give about 42 hours per week to the basic module study plus additional time for church work, traveling to tutorials, etc. To complete a level in a year is clearly a full-time job! The program is flexible, however, allowing students to take only as many modules as they desire in a given year. It is also important to know that all students are invited to attend a program at the College twice a year. There are a summer school and a winter school in which the entire student body gathers for several days to a week for intensive study and community building.

The first ordination student to have been trained entirely under the module program is Mrs. Gill Gordon, who hopes to be ordained this summer as an Assistant Minister. We were privileged to attend two tutorial sessions with her and one of her tutors, the Rev. Christopher Hasler. We were treated to a lively exploration of *Heaven and Hell* for two 1 1/4 hour sessions separated by a tea break.

On Tuesday morning the conference began. We were thrilled to meet twenty ministers and church leaders who were connected with the College as module writers and tutors. The conference also included six students. On Wednesday, we had outside input from Patricia Wood, a university educator who explored differences in the learning styles of men and women. The conference also included a session in which all of us participated as students in a tutorial on *Conjugal Love*.

We were impressed by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable group who had gathered at New Church College. John and the board were open to sincere and honest feedback from all those



Left: Anne Cansell NCC administrator, and Marian Kidd, librarian.

Below: The Rev. Christopher Hasler, tutor, and Mrs. Gill Gordon in a tutorial session on *Heaven and Hell*.



involved in the program. Everyone talked about how much work this process is. There were a variety of suggestions for improving some of the modules and writing future ones. Everyone, however, seemed united in enthusiasm for this form of education and appreciation for the work of John Presland, the board, and the module writers, tutors, and students.

On the last day of the conference, we were invited to lead the final communion service. We asked the Rev. Mary Duckworth to assist us (the only ordained woman in the British conference). It was an opportunity for us to say thanks and "Cheerio" to the smashing (translation: awesome) people we had met at the conference! Later that afternoon, Ron took off for sight-seeing in Manchester while Wilma took a bus to the nearby town of Leigh to research her family roots, where her great-grandpa Wake lived before emigrating to the United States in the late 1800s. The final evening, Wilma, Ron, Margaret, and John enjoyed fish 'n chips and mushy peas and chatted about how enriching our time together had been. We also brainstormed ways that our two churches might develop a closer relationship.

Our response could only be expressed in the new term Ron taught our British colleagues: "Awesome!" We were truly overwhelmed by the commitment, work, and accomplishments of these British Swedenborgians in this new educational endeavor.

Primarily, we learned that we have much to gain from ongoing dialog and cooperation between The New Church College and SSR, since in many ways our directions are similar. By expanding our distance education options, SSR is also attempting to address the needs of those students who don't want to relocate to a new city. Like New Church College, we no longer have students living at the school. The direction being explored by the SSR Board involves utilizing a House of Studies model within a larger theological community that could easily incorporate expanded offerings to students living elsewhere. The New Church College has much to teach us in this regard.

The other great benefit of our trip is the hope of a closer connection between the British Conference and Convention. We are, after all, brothers and sisters in the same faith. Ron is exploring the possibility of Convention sending youth representation to the New Church Youth Camp 2000 next summer. He also plans to attend the Conference sessions in 2001, and

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The Church:

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involved in the life of the Christian Church. Now, 50 years later, the figure is 20%, and I believe that could be a tad high. In the United States the estimate is 25%; in Northern Europe it's 5%; and in the U.K. it's 3%. I wonder if you are aware that virtually all religious writers today say that we now live in a post-Christian world. This phrase was used twice on the church page in last Saturday's *K-W Record*: *We now live in a post-Christian world*. The organized church simply is not a very real or important factor in the lives of most people in the western world today. Most people probably still think of themselves as Christian; they like to have the church around for baptisms, weddings, funerals, and so on, but the church does not play a very meaningful role in the lives of most people. Now this is not necessarily bad, or sad, or hopeless—this is the way it is, and we have to face these facts of life realistically.

The church of the future will be quite different. It will be smaller than it is today, but much more vital and vibrant, with every member being totally

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In the coming decades increasingly more people will become aware of the fact that materialism, which peaked in the 1980s, simply does not satisfy our real needs. It doesn't answer the great, urgent questions of life, and there will be a massive return to spirituality and religion at its best. The human quest for deeper meaning will not be denied.

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committed to its mission. The Lord's image of his followers being like salt, or leaven, comes to mind. Small, but essential.

I believe most religious names or labels will disappear in the next century. They won't be relevant, which will result in much more cooperation and harmony among all religious bodies. Several months ago the Lutherans and the Catholics buried the hatchet after 450 years of discord. Swedenborg's description of Christian unity is on its way. In the same vein, I believe the major world religions will come to recognize and respect each other's strengths and contributions.

In the coming decades increasingly more people will become aware of the fact that materialism, which peaked in the 1980s, simply does not satisfy our real needs. It doesn't answer the great, urgent questions of life, and there will be a massive return to spirituality and religion at its best. The human quest for deeper meaning will not be denied.

Because of environmental issues, caused by the unbearable pressures we are placing on soil, air, and water, people will be literally forced to simplify their lives, and this, in turn, could bring them face to face with religious alternatives. According to the World Watch think-tank, this will happen within twenty-five years.

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Music Director Needed!

We are looking for someone to serve as Music Director during our annual convention sessions. In general, this person will be responsible for working closely with those people who are organizing and planning our various worship services in order to provide music to enhance the worship experience. This person will also oversee the Song Patrol, and organize and lead the choir on Sunday morning. In return, this person will receive one-half room and board for the week of Convention. For more information, please contact Central Office at 617-969-4240.

Cheerio: Visiting New Church College In England

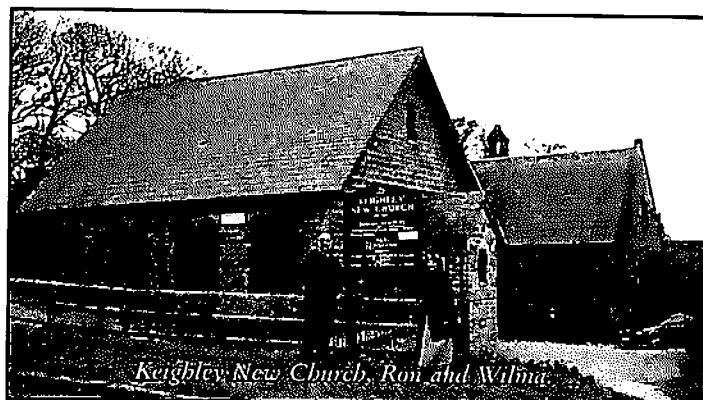
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will be looking into a range of other ways we can deepen our relationship.

Other things we learned from our trip include how to truly take a tea break! Wilma brought English tea bags back for SSR and has brought in a teapot for a community tea time. Ron is doing the same at Kitchener.

So, from Ron and Wilma, to all the *Messenger* readers (including those in the British Conference), we say "Cheerio" and invite everyone to a relaxing cuppa! (translation: nice hot cup of fresh tea or coffee served with a biscuit or light meal).

The Rev. Ron Brugler is president of the denomination and part-time pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario. The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is a professor at SSR and author of Wings and Roots, the New Age and Emanuel Swedenborg in Dialog, published in November 1999 by J. Appleseed and Co.



Keighley New Church, Ron and Wilma

What an expansive moment it always was—like opening a larger-than-life present—when, as a child in the 1920s, with my mother, we pushed open the large oak door of Cincinnati's Swedenborgian Parish House before a party there. The hubbub of voices, the fragrance of turkey with sage dressing, the tip-tapping of ladies' high heels moving up and down the tiled halls, starched white damask tablecloths, little girls spinning in their best dresses, elderly gentlemen in three-piece navy-blue suits waiting for supper, tenors and basses resounding far off in rehearsal—all this festivity made a burst of welcome as I came in. Whether for the Christmas Tea, Pancake Supper, Good-Cheer-Club card party, Ladies-Aid bazaar, or annual business meeting, the Swedenborgians in the 1920s put on a constant schedule of gala events. There were watercress sandwiches, Boston brown bread with thick cream cheese, and platters and platters of other good thing to eat, with hot chocolate for the children.

My mother truly belonged here. In 1888 she had been christened Ruth in the old downtown Swedenborgian "temple," where she attended Sunday School and the Young People's League; she had hiked along country roads at the end of the streetcar line with the Swedenborgian Outing Club and had performed as the Russian princess and other heroines in the church's Little Theater. She had graduated in liberal arts at the University of Cincinnati alongside several of these ladies in their high-heeled, T-strap shoes. So, whenever my little sister, brother, and I emerged through the parish house door, we belonged here, too.

A marble bust of Emanuel Swedenborg presided over a far corner of the big square entrance hall. In front of his pale, bewigged, eighteenth-century profile sat an empire sofa, catty-cornered. The children's coats were always piled on its slippery horsehair curves. So, as we three came in with our mother, several ladies would unbutton our overcoats and leggings, slide off my brother's earmuffs, and add our things to the woolen heap on the sofa. Other ladies would call out, "Oh, Ruth! You're just in time to do the flowers for the speaker's table!"

As I look back, I see that our church world was then as much an expression of its nineteenth-century founders as its twentieth-century inheritors, for my mother's generation had remained anchored in the expectations of their

IT'S NOT IN BUILDINGS

A Memoir with Angels

grandfathers and fathers. My mother's Swedenborgian contemporaries had absorbed the optimistic certitude of Industrial Revolution manufacturers about the eternal progress of humankind. Like the others in that energetic community of perhaps three-hundred Cincinnati Swedenborgians, my mother believed that this sustaining world into which she had been born would go on forever. The organization in which she found herself had been established by early Cincinnati factory-owners who subscribed to Swedenborg's liberal theology. By the turn of the century, the group had outgrown the early "temple," and this handsome new church and parish house in the eastern part of the city had been built and paid for by the solid, successful industrialists.

Education was of great interest to the Cincinnati Swedenborgians. The Sunday-school room was graced by two golden Gothic windows shaped at the tops like hands pointed in prayer, and amber light cast by the diamond panes filled a space large enough for all the parishioners to send all their children every Sunday. The expansive space may have inspired one of our favorite Sunday-school songs: Building daily building, we are building for eternity. In spring, summer, and fall through the yellow glass, we could see the leaves patterned in chartreuse where the Boston Ivy outside curled around each window. We children, like our mother, felt that this room, echoing with pleasant Bible stories and cheerful songs, would be here forever and ever, like the Lord's prayer.

The white and sienna Italian-tiled hall, which smelled of narcissus and furniture polish, led from the Sunday-school room past the library and kitchen to the sanctuary. All the way down this hall were short, wide Gothic windows, resembling those I had seen in pictures of Anne Hathaway's cottage. And then, throughout the building, were our ever-ready angels. We didn't have saints; we had angels, angels everywhere. Angels

appeared in small images by William Blake on our walls and were personified in the seven slender angels with Gibson Girl faces behind our altar; these were Tiffany stained-glass, art-nouveau windows from New York in mauve, lavender, and gold. In the library, we enjoyed picture books with cherubic infants and small angels drawn by Swedenborgian artists Howard Pyle and Jessie Willcox Smith; avenging and guardian angels by other Swedenborgian painters and watercolorists surrounded us. And between the Anne Hathaway windows, we walked down the hall under the eyes of dark oil portraits of recent generations of vigilant guardians like Adam Hurdus, a British-born printer who became the Cincinnati "temple's" founding minister. Other worthy men who had enriched our own worldviews with their earnest Swedenborgian scholarship were portrayed, as well as the bewhiskered, waistcoated, benevolent nineteenth-century gentlemen who had created this hospitable building.

Swedenborg believed that all people are born into angelhood and continue growing into that state when they leave the physical realm. Certainly, in the Cincinnati congregation there were unseen but increasingly-felt angels, women who had been—and who still were—keeping the organization in order with their skinny, black Victorian penmanship. Each flyleaf and spine in our church library remained labeled in the hand of the late librarian, Miss Wheelwright. From the children's section, I enjoyed *Bessie Goes to the Mountains*, *Bessie Goes to the Seashore*, *The Bobbsey Twins*—all lettered with Miss Wheelwright's imprimatur. When long boxes of crêpe-paper angel wings were handed down from storage closets for our Christmas pageant, each box too had been carefully labeled in long-ago, firm, feminine penmanship on red-bordered stationer's labels. The labels themselves represented the choir of housekeeping angels who remained in touch with us by maintaining order in the church closets and library.

Angels were indeed very, very real to us Swedenborgians, helping to keep the divine providence, as we understood it, in loving operation, just as the library labels ensured order on the bookshelves. Nothing was left to chance, we knew. We often felt angelic guidance at the most unexpected times. When members of our family or church

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IT'S NOT IN BUILDINGS

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community died, we didn't say they died; we said "Cousin Madie" or "Algernon Chapman" or so-and-so "has gone to the spiritual world." We felt that another function of the angels was to help people make an easy transition from bodily life to an entirely spiritual life, and that this process was taking place at these times. Increasingly, in the late 1920s and 1930s there were many Cincinnati Swedenborgians who needed that angelic assistance as our bustling church community began to thin out.

Despite our forebears having set up a new church building in the suburbs, sadly the Cincinnati Swedenborgian Church with its focus on the esoteric and the mystic, which had so attracted innovative industrialists two generations before, did not attract American suburbanites of the 1930s. Our church had been peopled in my childhood by romantic traditionalists very much at home in the recently built complex of buildings that looked like a church in the British countryside. There was, for example, Miss

Melrose Pitman, professor of art history at the University of Cincinnati, who had the first organic farm I ever heard of where she went in summers (when church was closed because we all took long vacations). Her English father had invented shorthand, and upon moving to Cincinnati had built a pleasure-dome sort of house crowned by Turkish-type turrets and tall narrow windows high on a hill overlooking the Ohio River. If we were performing a medieval pageant, Miss Pitman would rearrange our costumes to assure authenticity. She draped our striped bedouin head cloths when we were shepherds at Christmas; she even supplied a crook or two from her farm.

Well into the 1930s, Miss Pitman wore her hair close-cropped in the 1920s flapper fashion. Her aura was Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury bluestocking. Although to a child Miss Pitman seemed somewhat aloof, it also seemed that she accepted most of the church ladies as her equals. There was, in fact, a sympathy, a sense of camaraderie, among those second and third-generation Swedenborgian women. Like liberated butterflies, they had emerged from old-fashioned home-

births and Victorian girlhood glorying in the individualism of voting, in freedom from high-necks and corsets, and in having earned their own university degrees.

Built into their pride at being modern women was the fact that they belonged to the tradition of Swedenborgian intellectuals who had helped to conceptualize and create the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. This parliament, where there were women speakers and official women participants, was the revolutionary beginning of religious pluralism in this country, modeling Swedenborg's concept that all religions are equal. This courageous new view was part of these ladies' own specialness. The Swedenborgian women in Cincinnati also identified with Julia Ward Howe, the Swedenborgian social reformer and poet, and with Helen Keller, who had called Swedenborg "...light-bringer to my blindness." In 1927 people were admiring

In wrestling with contemporary problems, Mr. Spiers emphasized that spirit was more real than physical material; and the basis of his liberal, social insight, amazing to me, was eighteenth-century Swedenborg.

Keller's *My Religion*, a best-seller in which she told how, through her Swedenborgian faith, she had gained the inner resources to overcome her handicaps. My mother's church friends felt that Helen Keller personified the ideal, independent, outspoken Swedenborgian woman.

Among those who had gone to the spiritual world earlier was my great-grandmother, a spiritual discoverer who had found in Swedenborg's views the answer to her own quest for life's meaning. Through her father's family—which carried gold bullion up and down Lewis and Clark's waterways from New Orleans to Cincinnati, St. Paul, and Pittsburgh—Anne Babbitt had been able to become financially independent a generation or two earlier. My sense of Anne is almost Arthurian in her clear-eyed search for truth. She represents other Swedenborgian women who in the 1820s and 1830s dared to confront old-fashioned faith, to open it up to be seen as a system that could be entered into by the intellect. A century after Anne, this feminine purposefulness strongly imbued my mother's female contemporaries in Cincinnati's Swedenborgian community,

the ladies tip-tapping up and down the hall from Sunday-school room to sanctuary—making the entire Cincinnati church and its members into a large, useful, contented system.

I suspect that Melrose Pitman was unmarried by choice, a pattern not wide, but noticeable after World War I. There were other contented, unmarried ladies in our church at that time, such as my Cousin Catherine, who walked in soft silks, gardened in French smocks, drove her dark-blue Packard with studied elegance, and always came through the parish hall door smelling delicious, tossing her curly bob like an outdoor princess. Within our church building I, too, felt like an heiress. Throughout its artistic, solid structure was the sense that it had been carefully designed for us, built for us, furnished with what was in fashion at the turn of the last century—stalwart arts-and-crafts era furniture, oil painting, Tiffany stained-glass, and a

William Morris window. Our forefathers had not only planned for worship, they wanted us to be comfortable in social and business meetings and in study groups. All the elements of the building spoke to us: We are glad you are here; we expected you.

And we enjoyed our inheritance and spread it around. At the turn of the century, young people of various denominations attended our church because we allowed nonreligious theatricals, card parties, and dancing when most other churches did not. Many of Cincinnati's flaming youth of that day wanted to perform in the Little Theater project that flourished in the Swedenborgian Church under the direction of a talented young playwright named Elsie Hobart. Since many of the parts were written for specific players, each autumn an original production got underway; today these plays may be found in Hobart's collection *Christmas Candles: Plays for Boys and Girls*. Beneath our new Sunday-school room with its golden windows was a basement containing an auditorium with a lovely stage and real footlights; Elsie's new play was produced there each Christmas. In a storybook ending equaled only by the finale of many of her own scripts, at a

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IT'S NOT IN BUILDINGS

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national convention of Swedenborgians held in Cincinnati in 1919, Elsie met and fell in love with a Swedenborgian manufacturer, president of the Carter's Ink Company in Boston. After her wedding, she moved East and no longer wrote plays. By the early 1930s, the Little Theater down in the church basement was dark.

Like the Boston ivy curling around our church windows, the outer world of nature was intrinsic to the Cincinnati Swedenborgians. Much of our church furniture and the altar itself had been carved in walnut with lilies and leaves and creatures of the field by Henry Frye, a late-Victorian woodcarver. Besides Miss Pitman and her passions for organic vegetables and beekeeping, we had Miss Florence Murdoch, a watercolorist who specialized in tiny florets, which she painted as she observed them through a 30-power microscope.

Miss Murdoch, a pear-shaped lady of great determination, used her snapping black eyes to underscore her opinions. One of her enthusiasms was Urbana University, the Swedenborgian college in Urbana, Ohio. She always urged us three children to become good readers so we could go to Urbana, since after Miss Wheelwright had gone to the spiritual world, Miss Murdoch had become the church librarian. When Sunday school was over, children were not expected to attend church. So, we went into the long, low, little library, and we each chose two books (Miss Murdoch's limit) to read during the following week. Occasionally, we began our reading in the William Morris-style armchairs, waiting until church was over. At those times, my brother would read bound copies of *St. Nicholas Magazine* because periodicals were not to be charged out. Afterwards he would take home two regular books such as *Tom Swift and His Giant Cannon* or *Hans Brinker and His Silver Skates*.

My little sister would always take home Thornton Burgess' nature stories so that my grandfather could read them to her. I worked steadily through many book series like the *Bessie* stories.

It never occurred to any of us in the early 1930s that we were not reading contemporary children's literature. For me the only out-of-sync twinges came when all my school friends had seen Walt Disney's *Three Little Pigs*, and I was not allowed to go to the movies. My mother said children should create their own amusements. She read books to us like *The Little Lame Prince* and *Robin Hood*.

By this time, none of my cousins were attending our Sunday school. Despite having been born and baptized in the Swedenborgian Church, their parents had deserted their religious tradition and, with their children, were attending community churches in the various suburbs where they now lived. This was happening all over America; as people migrated farther and farther out from the cities, they often left their old church affiliations. The sunlight in our own big Sunday school room shone now on only a few small heads.

In the mid-1930s our old minister, the Scotsman Mr. Hoeck, retired. Our new minister was Mr. John Spiers, who was as ascetic and cerebral as Mr. Hoeck had been romantic. With Mr. Hoeck's white bobbing mane around us, the Holy Spirit was everywhere present; all the ladies revered him, and even the children shared their awe. In contrast, university professors come to hear Mr. Spiers' long sermons. Under Mr. Hoeck, my mother and her contemporaries never noticed that America was changing. Despite declining membership throughout the nation, our own Cincinnati church had gone on as planned by its founders as if it were still the late 1800s, even though our membership was shrinking. Under Mr. Spiers' impersonal stare through rimless glasses, and listening to his emphasis on the social inequalities being addressed by Franklin Roosevelt's administration, some of us suddenly became aware that America had turned upside down when we were not looking.

In wrestling with contemporary problems, Mr. Spiers emphasized that spirit was more real than physical material; and the basis of his liberal, social insight, amazing to me, was eighteenth-century Swedenborg. As a teenager, it seemed astonishing for John Spiers to reveal that spirituality, as described two hundred years ago, could be used to solve society's problems in the twentieth century. He quoted Swedenborg's explanations incessantly. He pointed out the resemblance of Swedenborgian doctrines to those of Buddhism. And the university professors in the audience ate it up. Miss Pitman began to attend church more regularly and became friends with Mr. Spiers' sister, a California nutritionist who believed in organically grown foods and who had come to live in Cincinnati. But my grandmother said she couldn't hear Mr. Spiers, because he talked too fast. At eleven o'clock Miss Murdoch busied herself about the library and scarcely came into church. My cousin Catherine came with armloads of flowers for the altar, arranged them on each side of Henry

Frye's stately carved candlesticks, but left the church service before the sermon so that she wouldn't have to listen to it.

By that time, our church, once so crowded, was scarcely attended at all. There were no events, no study groups, and the sanctuary began to smell unused and mildewy. From the pulpit, Mr. Spiers could see a sea of shining pews. Most of my grandmother's friends had died. People who had been Swedenborgians became Episcopalians or something else, so that we no longer held Christmas teas and pancake suppers, and the annual meeting was now relegated to an hour following church service because there were too few ladies to prepare a delicious meal.

As Mr. Spiers commented and dealt on successive Sundays with the totalitarian problems confronting the world—Italy overrunning Ethiopia, Hitler pressing the Jews out of Europe, Chamberlain kowtowing to the Germans—the threat of a second world war constantly swelled. My well-protected childhood ended with Pearl Harbor and World War II.

After the war and after Mr. Spiers and his family had moved to California, and after my mother, Cousin Catherine, Miss Pitman, and Mr. Hoeck had entered the spiritual world followed by Florence Murdoch and then John Spiers, Cincinnati's Swedenborgian Church was demolished.

Even though its creators and feminine inheritors had expected the cluster of granite buildings to last forever, the property was needed by the city for an expressway. The sad hush and smell of mildew are gone. The once-sacred space is occupied by curved exits and concrete cloverleaves. Today cars speed at 65 miles per hour though the site of the golden Sunday school room, the Italian-tiled halls, the cheerful parish house, the small library, the chancel with its seven lavender-and-gold Tiffany angels.

The ladies are all complaining at once. "You'd have thought they'd be perfectly furious!" my mother is saying. "They didn't even mind," Miss Wheelwright marvels, "that the library is gone!" "But I told you," the Reverend Mr. Spiers scolds. "Temporal walls are a non-reality and ..." my Cousin Catherine starts to interrupt. But Mr. Spiers goes on, "Catherine, you never even stayed in church long enough to hear what I tried to tell you."

Other voices remonstrate: "And what about the organ?" "...the baptismal font?"

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IT'S NOT IN BUILDINGS

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"And where," Miss Pitman queries sharply, "are the art-nouveau windows with all their critical symbolism?"

"Carol's got them," Mr. Spiers says, setting his chin firmly.

"But if the church couldn't have them, they should have gone to Urbana," Florence Murdoch snaps.

"No, no," the minister expounds. "Carol and lots of other people are using them as concepts. It's like a nova expanding. Expanding just the way I told you it would. It's reality. It's the church without walls. This is what Swedenborg wants: a new church, the sacred space developing and growing within each man!"

"Don't forget the women, John," Julia Ward Howe says. "You always say 'man,' but we're talking about Carol's imagination. And there are lots of other women involved with their own inner spaces."

"But I'm sure Carol is absolutely devastated," my mother is almost crying. Julia is replying, "Of course she's not," when, in the midst of the hubbub, with an affirmative burst of energy like a big oak door opening, a group of bewhiskered gentlemen angels appear. My mother accosts them angrily. "I can't understand you! All your planning!...the beautiful tiles!...the stained-glass angels...all gone!" "Yes," the ladies chime with Ruth. "What about the Tiffany windows? Why aren't you angry?"

The early Cincinnati manufacturers smile beatifically. "Building inner space in every human...This is truly the efficient way to multiply sacred energy...We see it now," they murmur contentedly like an angelic choir of tenors and basses bestowing a larger-than-life present upon the complaining women.

"What? Really?" the women ask. "How can you be sure?"

"Absolutely," they respond. "Remember the song. Your children are simply building now with better materials, with the mortar of spirit, with the timbers of love and usefulness. They are building for eternity. But we're sure they'd be open to some guidance, a little unexpected planning, perhaps. Encourage them to build even higher, wider, to let in more light, to break into song more often."

The querulous looks fade out. The ladies begin to bustle about cheerfully as ever. "We'll see what we can do to help."

This essay originally appeared in Rooted in Spirit: A Harvest of Women's Wisdom (West Chester, Penna.: Chrysalis Books, 1999), 67-74, and is reprinted with permission of the Swedenborg Foundation.



Swedenborgian Community Research Project

Who designed the beautiful, soul-lifting New Church (Swedenborgian) building where you went to

Sunday school? Or, perhaps where you were married? Who built the church? Who paid for it? And what art tradition inspired its shape and interior colors? If you can answer some of these questions, you can help preserve and document the many lovely Swedenborgian churches built in North America as the Industrial Revolution prospered (from approximately 1840 to 1929). Many of those buildings have been razed or sold and it is essential that people who know about them can pool their recollections before much of this precious Swedenborgian heritage is lost.

The Swedenborg Foundation is now undertaking a project to produce a pictorial history—with text and art-quality photographs—to explore the emphasis on aesthetics characteristic of Swedenborgian churches during that period as a means of uplifting individuals to commune with the divine spirit. The Foundation intends this book as a vessel to collect and conserve certain fragile relics and vestiges of the enterprising and aesthetic past of Swedenborgians and will be an attractive means of sharing and displaying their heritage in all its variety and beauty.

This book will not only depict the substantial New Churches built during the Industrial period, but will also develop the thesis that the builders were particularly open-minded people who were curious about a wide variety of ideas—ranging from new ideas in the field of religious thought to new ways of manufacturing and product innovation—people who shared their enthusiasm, their wealth, and their sense of aesthetics. The research (to which all readers are invited to contribute) intends to show that the spirit of enterprise, which stimulated American inventors to utilize new methods of energy production in their factories, was commensurate with the open-mindedness and intellectual curiosity that caused many early manufacturers to become readers of Swedenborg and ultimately, builders of the New Church edifices so loved by their parishioners. The publication will document both "General Convention" and "General Church" New Church buildings and their builders. Whenever possible, the book will picture Swedenborgian churches no longer extant.

The proposed publication grows out of Carol Skinner Lawson's recent master's thesis on nineteenth-century Swedenborgianism prepared for Bennington College. Carol will serve as the book's writer/editor. Formerly the associate editor of Convention's *Messenger*, she is presently the editor of the Foundation's Chrysalis Reader series. Deborah Forman, the Foundation's publisher and executive director, is writing to New Church societies throughout North America to enlist their help in acquiring the research base needed for the book. Individuals who know of the existence of art-quality photographs of Swedenborgian churches (either interior or exterior images), or of historical information regarding how these churches were funded and built are requested to please contact Carol Lawson (804-983-3021), or the Swedenborg Foundation (800-355-3222).

The etching above shows the Cincinnati New Church (Carol's childhood church), built at the turn of the last century, and now demolished. Thanks to Carol its history will be permanently preserved.



A Personal Perspective on The General Council Meeting from a First-time Temenos Visitor

Ken Turley
November, 1999

Dear Friends,

I've just returned from a week at Temenos, one of Convention's five retreat and spiritual growth centers. It was a beautiful setting, a productive meeting, old and new friends, and ended with a sacred celebration as Susannah Currie was installed as the minister of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos.

I came back uplifted, inspired, with a new sense of purpose for our local church and a renewed vision of, and for, our national church.

Wednesday I made the nine-hour (ten with the fifty-mile wrong turn!) drive to just west of Philadelphia. Temenos is situated on about fifty acres of forest and field in the Pennsylvania hill country. At the top of the hill is a residence and meeting place appropriately called "Sky Meadow." At the foot of a gently sloping forested valley is the Old Farm House, which is also housing and meeting space, and the Caretaker's House, which is being used as a caretaker's

house! The recently constructed Retreat House is beautifully situated at the top of the north slope of the valley. It has two kitchen areas, a large meeting room with piano, offices, meeting rooms and sleeping rooms for two to four people each. It was here that we ate our meals and held our meetings.

Thursday morning the Finance Committee was meeting, so I took the opportunity to explore the grounds. There are a number of walking trails, and a whole network of active deer trails, through the woods. The underbrush can get incredibly thick with brush, an assortment of berry bushes and their thorns, and vines that often climb high into the branches of the trees. Virulent poison oak is one of those vines, and so the trails take on an added blessing for those who would like to enjoy the beauty of nature without the pain and struggle.

The valley itself is a virtual bird sanctuary. Hundreds of birds of all kinds inhabit the trees and vines, and you soon begin to see that the woods are in constant motion as they flit from

branch to branch. There is a time in the morning hours when all the birds begin to chirp and call together, and the whole valley is filled with their singing. Other times, like around dusk, the valley is strangely silent.

After lunch we got down to work. We started with an introductory talk by Convention's president, the Rev. Ron Brugler. Following the thrust of his introduction we looked at the visions and plans of the various support units: Information Management (IMSU), Education (EDSU), Communications (COMSU), Financial and Physical Resources (FPRSU), and Ministries (MINSU). We then took their priorities and, from among them and our own vision session, organized our priorities for this year, next year, and the immediate future.

Primarily our priority of vision focused around the further development of ways, old and new, of communicating information. This included both the conveying of information within and throughout convention and the ways in which we

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The Church: (Continued from page 5)

There will be a great increase in the harmonizing and working together of science and religion. Please read again the fascinating article in the November '99 *Messenger*, "Grappling with Science and Religion: subjects stage dramatic intellectual comeback," by Gregg Easterbrook.

I see a great deepening and growth of non-institutional spirituality, in many diverse forms, all marked by openness, honesty, compassion, and personal involvement in the world. So, the lines between organized religion, spirituality, and the world in general become fuzzy, blending together into one harmonious whole.

Perhaps the single most important task of the church is to help individuals and groups to dream great dreams. *God is in the midst of all great dreaming.* "Without vision, the people perish." Without love, people shrivel up and die. Without hope there is no future. This is what the church, at its best, is all about—to help people open up to the love, hope, and faith that the Lord wants to share with us. So basically I am quite optimistic about religion and the church in the coming decades and centuries. I am hopeful mainly because I am totally convinced that the Lord God is as active and involved and present in the world today as He was in biblical times, or 1000 years ago, and as He will be 5000 years from now. This is what

the garden stories in Genesis I and Revelation 22 are all about.

They are telling us that God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; and that He is overseeing and guiding the unfolding development of His glorious creation. This is the golden thread running throughout the entire story of LIFE.

In the last two thousand years there have been three quantum leaps in humankind's history. By quantum leaps I mean relatively brief periods of time when enormous, fundamental changes occurred in the way people thought and lived. In those watershed times there was a radical shift in human consciousness. The folks who study this sort of thing tell us that *we are in the midst of the fourth quantum leap right now.* Think about this! We have been given the incredible, awesome privilege of being alive in this grand and glorious time. Isn't this the main task of the church, both today and in the future: to help make the Holy City dream come true?

Paul Zacharias is a retired Swedenborgian pastor living in Kitchener, Ontario. He has authored a number of articles and pamphlets, including the perpetually popular Swedenborgians See It This Way, recently reprinted by J. Appleseed & Co., the denomination's publisher.



A Personal Perspective...

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communicate information about our beliefs, our church, and who we are to new people who come to us and to the outside world in general.

There was a major grant authorized to help the Wayfarers Chapel replace the visitor's center. The center was lost some years ago due to land movement. The Wayfarers Chapel is Convention's most famous church. Besides conducting hundreds of weddings each year, providing worship services each Sunday, special holiday celebrations, and a growing schedule of concerts and presentations, the Chapel and grounds are visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year who come to admire the architecture of Lloyd Wright (son of Frank) or bask in the beauty of the grounds and gardens. The visitors center is the place where we are able to introduce them to Swedenborg, his vision of the Lord, and who we are as a church. The most current technology will be used in the building and the displays, and the majority of the project should be finished later this summer.

There is a constant and growing support for Convention's youth as funding was increased for the coming year's Youth Leader's Training Sessions, and EDSU continues to explore the possibility of a Youth Minister for the denomination.

The concept of Interim Ministry was moved one step further along as the Placement Committee will present a proposal to the Council of Ministers at our annual convention. If this meets with COM's endorsement it is possible that the way for further action will be clear before us.

Speaking of this summer's convention, it will be held at Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio. The theme will be "Building a City of God" and will take place in conjunction with the University's 125th anniversary. Urbana University, one of the first coeducational institutions of higher education, was established by a group of Swedenborgians led by the town judge

who was, besides being one of the country's most influential citizens, a friend of Johnny Appleseed.

There continues to be a shortage of parish ministers to serve our churches in Convention. And SSR continues to deal with past problems while seeking to establish a vision and direction for the future. Relations and communications between SSR and Convention boards and committees are improving rapidly.

Our national church in Washington, D.C. was also an important subject. A large and valuable building, both beautiful and useful in architecture and design, it has aged since the days of its former glory. But an active society with a new minister, the Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, is seeking to renew both the spirit and the physical structure of the former congregation. Study has been done and plans for proceeding are in the works.

At the end of our session, we closely examined, discussed, and adjusted the

Primarily our priority of vision focused around the further development of ways, old and new, of communicating information. This included both the conveying of information within and throughout Convention and the ways in which we communicate information about our beliefs, our church, and who we are—to new people who come to us and to the outside world.

annual budget. It was a long process (apparently not as long as in some former years!) but strangely enough, never boring. For in each line item we discussed I could see some aspect of the life of our church. And how we dealt with that item would directly influence who we as a church are and will become. In the end, the budget was passed unanimously. We celebrated the end of our work together by sharing a meal and conversation about things other than funding problems, current curriculums and visions for the future. We simply got to know each other a little better.

The next morning, Sunday, the Rev. Susannah Currie was installed as pastor and director of Temenos. The society, largely made up of people from the former Philadelphia church, was joined by the members of General Council who did not have early flights. It was a simple but elegant service led by Susannah and the Rev. Ron Brugler,

pastor of the church in Kitchener, Ontario, and president of Convention. I accompanied Susannah in a musical call to worship, and the choir, with piano accompaniment and a little lead guitar, sang a spirited affirmation that "Jesus watches over us even though we may not see..." The ceremonies were capped off by a wonderful luncheon with a celebratory cake, prepared by Susannah's husband Dean and the rest of the staff. Serenading us during our meal was a young but very talented jazz duo playing guitar and stand-up bass. At least one of the players was from the General Church.

Sunday afternoon I began the long ride home. Driving north through the hills and on into the Delaware Water Gap I was treated to some spectacular foliage and countryside panoramas. The evening faded into a collage of golden browns, maroon and orange, yellow and gray.

It was later, around 11:30 pm, just short of the Maine border, that trouble started. Coming out of a rest stop, the car suddenly lost power and would only crawl along. I nursed the poor beast into the parking lot of a garage just off the freeway. I spent the rest of the night in a sleeping bag

trying to get comfortable lying across the front seat. I can now verify beyond all doubt that it is virtually impossible to do this. At 6:30 a.m. the garage opened and my day began—quite differently than from the deer stand I had hoped to be in. The Rev. Andy Stinson, from our church in Elmwood, Mass., answered his phone and was kind enough to come pick me up and deliver me to Portland, Maine. So here I sit, in the waiting room of the local transmission expert (also an expert in adding up columns of large numbers!), awaiting further developments.

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

Reprint (edited) from the Fryeburg church's November 1999 newsletter.

Editor's Postscript: The General Council meeting took place October 21-23 (see December *Messenger*, p. 158). The jazz duo mentioned were Mike Kennedy and Anders Altfelt. Ken's car is now repaired and his wallet is considerably lighter.



Portland Church Announces Appointment of Interim Minister

The Swedenborgian Church of Portland, Maine, is delighted to announce the appointment of the Rev. Katharine (Kitsy) Hope Winthrop as half-time



Rev. Katharine (Kitsy)
Hope Winthrop

Interim Minister, beginning October 1. She led her inaugural service October 17 with a sermon entitled "First You Have to Row a Little Boat."

The Rev. Ms. Winthrop, a native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, spent her summers on the coast of Maine until age 21, and fell in love with the region. She graduated from Radcliffe College and then trained in nursing at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. In 1982 she earned an M. Div. degree from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, New York, and was

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ordained in the Unitarian-Universalist ministry.

She has served UU congregations in Rochester and Syracuse, New York, and spent twelve years as a settled pastor in Springfield, Vermont. Upon moving to Maine, she began serving as an interim consulting minister and has served churches in Saco, Belfast, and Rockland. She is currently quarter-time consulting minister to the Unitarian-Universalist church in Edgcomb.

She is an activist in the area of peace with justice. She recently facilitated a community preparedness workshop on the Y2K problem. She resides in Portland and is married to Wells Staley-Mays, previously director of Peace Action Maine. He currently directs a program to prevent youth violence. Kitsy has two grown children from a previous marriage.

Rev. Winthrop says in her recent newsletter article, "I look forward to pulling in harness with you to get your

religious education program reactivated, your new Community Care outreach supported, your relationship to the community beyond your walls (faith in action is what I call it) strengthened, plus so much more."

The Portland society has been without a minister for three years since the Rev. Ken Turley was called to serve the New Jerusalem Church in Fryeburg, Maine. We have been resourceful and innovative in supplying the pulpit with a diversity of lay leadership from within the church and guest ministers and speakers from the community. Rev. Winthrop's appointment is for halftime and she will preach twice a month, alternating with lay leaders, while providing pastoral and consultative services on a regular basis.

In the interim, the Portland church will continue its search for a settled pastor. Though not Swedenborgian herself, Kitsy's experience and commitment to interim ministry, i.e., helping congregations through life transitions, promises to provide the leadership necessary to facilitate community building and renewed growth and outreach of this energetic and highly committed Swedenborgian congregation.

—Jay Jordan, President

Columbus Day Youth Retreat

"Interpersonal Relationships" was the topic of the 1999 Columbus Day Youth Retreat held October 8-11 at Blairhaven Retreat Center in Duxbury, Mass. The retreat was sponsored by the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church Youth League.

The following impressions were written by Emily Turley and Renee Strange.

She sat staring unblinkingly at the open book in front of her: listening to the meditating words coming from the same book but from the mouth of her teacher. As her teacher switched to the graceful music of the wooden flute, she was filled with the peace of love and joy. She knew she had come home.

The retreat was filled with fun and excitement. The whole retreat was based on relations with yourself, others and God. The relationships were of all kinds including loving, marriage, work, friends and good to bad relationships of each aspect. In between each of our sessions we hunted for starfish and

went bowling. We rented some movies and had fun playing cards and just enjoying each other's company.

The first session was basically getting to know you and your personalities. The second session was on unhealthy relationships such as abusive, one-sided, and verbally abusive. The third session was on healthy relationships, such as loving, caring and growing with that relationship. The fourth session was on love and marriage. We had a newly married couple, Andrew and Sarah who answered all our questions. They told us about problems that occur and the great things in marriage also.

The retreat has changed many people in the way they act in

relationships. We have made friendships that will last forever. And the counselors were very fun.

*Your retreat girls,
Emily Turley and Renee Strange*



Standing, left to right: Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake, Renee Strange, Emily Turley, Joe Tucker, Merry Conant, Amy Reichardt, Mandy Kozar, Kristine Williams (hiding), Emily Woofenden, Rev. Lee Woofenden, Beki Phinney, Myrrh Woofenden, Veronica Higgins, Angela Peebles, Kerry Williams, Katy Bouffard, Kimberly Alpert. Kneeling: Adelia Raymond, Jason Woofenden. Not in picture: Sarah Buteux, Andrew Dole, Ben Phinney.

San Francisco

A New Year's Eve countdown celebration for all ages, followed by a 20th Century Farewell service, was enjoyed at the S.F. church from 7:30 December 31, 1999, to 1:00 a.m. January 1, 2000, featuring food, games, music, dancing, favors, photo booths, a silent art auction for charity, and a time capsule dedication.

Bible Study Group, led by the Rev. Rachel Rivers on the first & third Tuesdays, is using *Person to Person in the Gospel of Mark* by British theologian Paul Vickers (recently published by the Swedenborg Foundation). A spiritual growth group, led by Scott Barry & meeting every other Sunday, is using material developed by Peter Rhodes and the Rev. Frank Rose as the group examines methods of engaging life with spiritual principles. The Rev. Jim Lawrence presented an overview of Swedenborgianism November 4.

New York

The New York church's Wednesday Evening Discussion Group is looking at *Rooted in Spirit: A Harvest of Women's Wisdom*, a Swedenborg Foundation Chrysalis Book edited by Alice Skinner. The Rev. Ron Brugler, president of the Swedenborgian Church, made his first visit to the New York New Church Nov. 20-21 and gave the sermon on Sunday morning. Church consultant Lorraine Sando visited the church over the weekend of September 24-27 to work with the congregation on roles clarification. The minister and members shared the different expectations they had of the church, its members, and themselves. The *New York Times* Religion Editor Gustave Niebuhr visited the New York church & left with literature and input from the minister. Scott McLemee, contributing editor of the journal *Lingua Franca*, and author of a recent Swedenborg article reprinted in *Studia Swedenborgiana* also visited the church. Scott is newly active at our Washington D.C. church. The Rev. Robert McCluskey, along with the Rev. Drs. Dorothea Harvey and Jonathan Mitchell and MaryAnn Fischer represented the Swedenborgian Church at the National Council of Churches

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meetings held in Cleveland November 8-12. It was the 50th anniversary of the Council, which was inaugurated in 1950 in Cleveland. As is customary, a report of that meeting will be published in the *March Messenger*.

LaPorte, Indiana

The LaPorte New Church congregation filled Christmas gift bags for the inmates of the LaPorte County Jail, after becoming aware of deplorable conditions of overcrowding and lack of basic needs there from the LaPorte Ministerial Association, which has formed a Jail Support Group to bring those injustices to light and help remedy them.

Stonehouse Bookstore & Growth Center held an Open House December 11, 1999, to celebrate moving into their own building in Kirkland, Washington (see December *Messenger*). Music, refreshments, free mini-readings and chair massages were offered, plus 20% discounts on services and products available through the end of December.

The **Spiritual Network Center** in Concord, New Hampshire, pastored by the Rev. Nadine Cotton continues its successful outreach to the community, with meditation groups, a women's support group, a men's support group, spiritual counseling, a free Reiki clinic, and its second annual Wholistic Fair, which was well attended.

The Swedenborgian Church In Temenos

The Rev. Susannah Currie was officially installed as pastor of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos October 24, 1999, with Convention's president the Rev. Ron Brugler officiating. A potluck luncheon, arranged by Tony Tafel and Pete Brackman and

served by Dave and Doris Ann Anderson was attended by over 40 people. On the same date, six church members launched a spiritual growth group, gathered around the fireplace at the Retreat House, using the book, *The Joy of Spiritual Growth* by the Rev. Frank Rose and Robert Maginel. At the September quarterly meeting, the church members voted to become an Energy Star Congregation. (An Energy Star Congregation is one that is taking steps toward making their congregation's buildings more energy conserving and efficient).

Tom Neuenfeldt, husband of B.J. and hard working member & past president of Almont New Church Conference & Retreat Center, was voted Michigan's teacher of the year (1999). His honor will take him to the White House and to the National Principal's Convention in New Orleans. Tom is the principal at South Elementary in Ithaca, Michigan. He was nominated by his staff and selected by a panel of peers from the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association. Congratulations, Tom!

The Portland, Maine Swedenborgian Church initiated its monthly movie night in October, beginning by viewing and discussing the film, "Simon Birch," described as a "poignant coming of age story about a friendship between two young outcasts in a small Down-East town in the 1950s. The film raises vital questions about finding faith in God and faith that one's life has a purpose."

(Maybe we could coax a movie review from one of these folks for *The Messenger*!)

Portland church member Carol Fusco has gone to Oakland to attend the University of Creation Spirituality to earn a master's degree in a one-year program, and **Eli Dale** is commuting to Newton to attend Andover Newton Theological School in their M-Div program. The Portland church's new website is: <http://www.swedenborg.org>

Bill Woofenden will be lecturing at Andover-Newton Theological School for the students preparing for ministry.



Tememos

Winter-Spring Programs, JANUARY-MARCH

ONGOING CLASSES

YOGA

Doreen Hardy
Maonday, 6:45 to 8:15 p.m.
Thursdays, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

T' AI CHI

Melanie Quinn
Thursdays, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

CHALLENGES:

Home School Enrichment
Ruth Tafel
Tuesdays and Wednesdays

JANUARY

EXPLORING THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS OF RELIGION:

Christian Mysticism
Rev. Susannah Currie and Theresa
Whitedove
Sunday, January 9, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

MINDFULNESS GROUP MEDITATION

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

**AN EVENT FOR COUPLES: How do
Marriages Succeed in this Age of Stress
and High Expectations?**
Howard and Betsy Friend
Sunday, January 23, 2:00 to 8:00 p.m.

REIKI PRACTITIONER SUPPORT

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

EXPRESSIVE ART SERIES

Perry Martin or Bunnie Abbott
Friday mornings, monthly, beginning
January 28

SOUL'S JOURNEY - FIRE'S BREATH

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

REIKI: Level 1 Training

Nancy Mattila
Saturday, January 29, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
and Sunday, January 30, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

EMBER DAY

Kayta Gajdos
Sunday, January 30, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

FEBRUARY

THERAPEUTIC TOUCH: Professional Training, Level 1, Part 1

Peggy Fuhs
Saturday, February 5, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

EXPLORING THE MYSTICAL TRADI- TIONS OF RELIGION: Jewish

Kabbalism
Rabbi Myriam Klotz
Sunday, February 6, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

MINDFULNESS GROUP MEDITATION

Nancy Mattila
Wednesdays, February 9, 7:15 to 9:00 p.m.

HEALING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

- Holistic Medicine: Homeopathy
Ljuba Lemke
Sunday, February 13, 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

REIKI: Level II Training

Nancy Mattila
Saturday, February 19, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30
p.m. and Sunday, February 20, 9:30 a.m. to
4:30 p.m.

CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT

Sunday, February 20, 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

REIKI PRACTITIONER SUPPORT

Nancy Mattila
Wednesday, February 23, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

EXPLORING AND CELEBRATING INTROVERSION

Don Berman and Larilee Suiter
Saturday, February 26, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

HEALING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY - The Healing Touch: Reiki,

Therapeutic Touch and Massage
Nancy Mattila, Peggy Fuhs, and Lisa Schad
Sunday, February 27, 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

MARCH

WHAT ARE YOU REALLY HUNGRY FOR?

Doris Ferleger
Saturday, March 4, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

EXPLORING THE MYSTICAL TRADI- TIONS OF RELIGION:

Sufism and Islam
Muhaiyaddeen Suhaiba and Michael Toomey
Sunday, March 5, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH GROUP

Rev. Susannah Currie
Tuesdays, beginning March 7, 7:30 to 9:00
p.m.

MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION SERIES

Nancy Mattila
Tuesdays, beginning March 7
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon or 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

COMING HOME TO YOURSELF - BODY, MIND, SPIRIT

Perry Martin
Wednesdays, beginning March 8
9:30 to 11:30 p.m. or 7:15 to 9:00 p.m.

MINDFULNESS GROUP MEDITATION

Nancy Mattila
Wednesdays, March 8, 7:15 to 9:00 p.m.

WRITING FROM WITHIN: The Metcalf- Simon Practice of Proprioceptive Writing®

Mary Bok
Friday, March 10, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.,
Saturday, March 11, 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.,
and Sunday, March 12, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00
noon.

HEALING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY - Physical Healing Practices:

Yoga and T'ai Chi
Doreen Hardy and Melanie Quinn
Sunday, March 12, 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

WORLD RHYTHM ORCHESTRA

Tony Vacca
Saturday, March 18, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

REIKI PRACTITIONER SUPPORT

Nancy Mattila
Wednesday, March 22, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

MASK MAKING

Beth Ann Holloway
Saturday, March 25, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

HEALING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY - Psychotherapy: The Healing Continuum

Perry Martin and Kayta Gajdos
Sunday, March 26, 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

(The April and May programs will be
printed in the February *Messenger*).

For more information contact:

Temenos Retreat Center
1564 Telegraph Road
West Chester, PA 19382
phone 610-696-8145
fax 610-696-7335
email Temenos@chesco.com
website www.temenosretreat.org

A Happy and Fulfilling New Year—

(and new century
and new millennium

to those of that persuasion)

—from the editor and the
Communications Support Unit.



Birth

Bohlander—Edward William Bohlander entered this world November 29, 1999. He is the son of Ed Bohlander, longtime member of Convention, and his wife Crystal. The Bohlanders live in Plano, Kentucky, a suburb of Bowling Green. All are doing fine.

Baptisms

The following persons were baptized into the Christian faith at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Revs. Jim Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating:

Feng Tien Kao—Jackson Feng Tien Kao, son of John and Laurel Kao, July 4, 1999.

Gray—Richard Neal Gray III, son of Richard and Kimberly Gray, November 14, 1999.

Wayne—Helen Kali Wayne, daughter of Gillian and Tony Wayne, September 12, 1999.

Wright—Isobel Williams Wright, daughter of Diana Williams and Bob Wright, July 18, 1999.

Beauty, Wonder, and the Mystical Mind

(Continued from back page)

Through simple illustrations from his own life he invites us each to recognize the Holy in our own moments of awakening. And so here I am, really here now, finding beauty and wonder in a redwood tree, a madrone, a California live oak, and a deep blue sky. God is here, too.

Thank you, Dr. Van Dusen, for writing this book, and through it inviting us all into deeper recognition of the Divine in our everyday lives.

\$14.95. To order from the Swedenborg Foundation, call: 1-800-355-3222.

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers, D. Min., co-pastor at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, heads up a counseling ministry of the church called Conatus Counseling. A longtime member of the official credentialing body for American clergy who specialize in psychotherapy, the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, Dr. Rivers was recently advanced in standing to the Fellow level in 1999. We are happy to see her back in The Messenger.



Confirmations

Berry—Mary (Mrs. Dean) Berry, and Nora Mackenzie Berry, daughter of Christy Berry and granddaughter of Mary Berry, were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church October 10, 1999, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

The following individuals were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and welcomed into membership in the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church November 14, 1999, the Revs. Jim Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating: Alison and Steve Bailey, Suzie Convery, Janet Council, Rebecca and Bill Davidson, Terry Hove, John and Laurel Kao, Kevin Lapp, Bette McDonnell, Patty Schinzing, Diana Williams, Bob Wright, Barbara and Lindo Morucci.

The following persons were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church November 21, 1999, at the Portland, Maine Swedenborgian Church, in a lay service conducted by Nanci Adair, assisted by the Rev. Kitsy Winthrop: Kathleen Delaney, Margo Dittmer, Carrie Heitsch, Susan McCormick, Lisa Rice, Rachel Lyn Rumson.

Deaths

—Bowman Bracken, longtime dedicated member of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, entered the spiritual world October 22, 1999. A World War II veteran, he was known for his love of church and family. A service of resurrection was conducted November 2, 1999, the Rev. Kit Billings officiating.



Change of Address

John C. & Anne B. Perry
25 Cedar Farm Lane
Harpwell, ME 04079

Rev. Paul & Pat Zacharias
28C Ahrens St. West
Kitchener, Ont. N2H 4B7
Canada
(as of February 2000)

New Temenos website address:
www.temenosretreat.org
email to contact is:
information@temenosretreat.org
You may also contact Rev. Susannah Currie, director of Temenos, at
revscurrie@yahoo.com

Church Family News

Louise Woofenden suffered a stroke November 19 and was in the hospital for five days. Her physical condition is fine, and she is making progress on regaining speech, reading, and writing abilities. Notes, calls & prayers are appreciated. 48 Highland St.
Sharon, MA 02067
(781) 784-5041
email: billwoof@ix.netcom.com

Bob Kirven is home after a triple coronary bypass operation in late November which he came through in very good shape. 8650 N. 65th Ave., #316
Glendale, AZ 85302-4347
(602) 937-8376
email: robertkirven@worldnet.att.net

F. Bob Tafel is recuperating after surgery for a rotator cuff injury. 29 Fisher St.
Needham, MA 02429-1424
email: rtafel@earthlink.net

Corrections

The P.O. Box for Fountain Publishing printed in the December *Messenger* CD review of "Living Water" and "Revelation" (p. 161) was in error. The correct PO Box is 80011. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

The Rev. Ron Brugler informs us that the Call for Nominations in the November *Messenger*, (p. 143) should have also included the office of president.



Contribution Request

The Rev. Pavel Heger, New Church minister in the Czech Republic, sends the following request: "Would each of you like to help the New Church in the Czech Republic in its missionary work by donation of just \$3.00? We believe you would enjoy it! By your contribution great things would happen since the computer would start its work on missionary task and we would let you know more about it! Please Help!" Checks may be made out to "The New Church Mission," & sent c/o Rev. Pavel Heger, 756 51 Zasova 193, Czech Republic.



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.

Beauty, Wonder, and the Mystical Mind

by Wilson Van Dusen

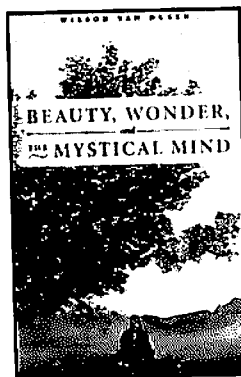
Review by Rachel Rivers

I am sitting in an easy chair in my living room with a view that looks out onto redwood trees, madrone, California live oak, and a deep blue sky. I am *racing* through Wilson Van Dusen's newest book from the Swedenborg Foundation, *Beauty, Wonder, and the Mystical Mind*, trying to ingest it all so I can get a review written for *The Messenger* before the next wave of activity and responsibility reaches me.

And suddenly I put the book down, breathe deeply, and *really* let in its message: Life is full of beauty and wonder, and if we will let ourselves remember that we are a part of it, we can know its beauty and wonder, and experience the presence of God.

Wilson Van Dusen is a long term scholar of Swedenborg. For a number of years he has been exploring the frontiers of mysticism (the direct experience of God), and he places Swedenborg in the context of the world's mystics. In this new book, Van Dusen easily opens up the *universal* aspect of religions. He sees religions as human enterprises, and seen in this way diverse religious practices make human sense. Van Dusen gives us examples from different cultures and religious traditions, helping us to become more at ease with the spectrum of possible experiences, and explaining that people are often too easily put off by apparent differences.

He gives us a survey of the qualities of the mysticism of the world's major religions and also a description of mysticism found outside of religious traditions. He heartily agrees with Swedenborg that



a person of God lives his or her faith, and there is no need for this to look "religious" in any traditional sense. He identifies true religion as a spiritual, or internal, reality, being *whatever brings a person into relationship with the More-Than-Self*.

Van Dusen is himself a mystic, and like other mystics he sometimes uses poetry as condensed statements of the experience of God. He describes mysticism and the mystical experience

from many perspectives, helping us to see how rich and diverse, how spectacular and how ordinary, the experience of More-Than-Self can be. Included in these perspectives is an examination of the connection of the appreciation of beauty and the experience of the Divine—an aspect of mysticism rarely touched on.

Van Dusen demystifies the mystical experience. Mysticism is the universal oneness underlying all reality, he tells us, and by recognizing and treasuring the little glimpses we are given of this oneness, we invite in more major encounters with God. He reminds us that having some sort of consistent spiritual practice helps us to find our center and prepares us more readily for the welcoming of the More-Than-Self. Reaching our own center and discovering the Divine invites us into a richer and deeper dance with life itself, enabling us to find our highest joy and use in this world. Mystical experience invites us into a life of joyful, useful activity.

I pick up this book again, in a wholly new state of mind—much more at peace. I am in easy conversation with *Beauty and Wonder* now, relaxed and enjoying its unfolding. I continue to find in its pages many treasures. Van Dusen brings the understanding of religion and mysticism down to earth, where we can all touch it and taste it.

(Continued on page 15)

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