

THE MESSENGER

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The Search is On!

Ron Brugler

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborg School of Religion, I am very pleased to inform you that this continues to be an exciting time for our seminary and denomination. Once the final votes are taken in February, we will embark upon the actual transition toward becoming the Swedenborgian House of Studies and our move to the Pacific School of Religion.

Plans for this summer's move are underway, and coordinators are in place for overseeing the many details involved. We have a committee working closely with the Pacific School of Religion faculty in developing our new curriculum that will meet the needs of our ordination, lay leadership and certificate students, as well as introducing Swedenborg and our denomination to the larger PSR community. And in preparation for the inaugural year of the SHS (Swedenborgian House of Studies), a Transition Committee on Personnel has also been formed and charged with the responsibility of making recommendations to the board for employing an Acting Dean/Director and initial guest faculty members.

I have agreed to serve as Chair of this important committee and am more than willing to do so. The very fact that I have been asked to serve in this capacity should assure you that SSR is not abandoning our denomination. Our goal is to better serve the body that has created us. Since foremost in our minds is the fact that this transformation will influence the future of our ministry, church, and

relationship with the larger world for years to come, we invite and welcome you to be a part of this process!

The members of the SSR Board Transition Committee on Personnel are, in addition to myself, Jane Siebert, Bob Reeber, and John Titus. George Sinclair, our interim president, is also serving as a consultant to this committee.

We recently met in Dayton, Ohio, and used that time to develop a proposal to the board concerning a working job description for an Acting Dean/Director. We also received the report of the Curriculum Committee and voted recommendations concerning our initial course offerings. The board, by email vote, approved the job description, and the search for our Acting Dean/Director is underway. Our goal is to present the board with our recommended candidate at the April meeting. We also hope to have recommendations to make at that time for visiting faculty. (I admit that this gets confusing, folks. Full faculty members will require approval of PSR. In short, they are giving us permission to employ guest faculty for the first two years in order to avoid this process.)

Included below is the Working Job Description for the Acting Dean/Director. This has been sent to all Convention ministers, General Council members, Church and Center presidents, Association presidents, and other interested individuals, in order to seek out names of people they think might be good for the job. By the time you read this, we will be in the process of selecting candidates to interview.

Working Job Description for the Acting Dean/Director of the Swedenborgian House of Studies

Basic Qualifications

- Has earned a doctorate in a relevant field, or is working towards one.

- Has demonstrated commitment to the Lord and the Swedenborgian Church.
- Understands and appreciates ministry as a calling of all God's people and as a profession.
- Would work productively with the Swedenborgian House of Studies Board of Trustees, faculty, students, and denomination.
- Has exposure to, and is comfortable with, the theological and academic world.
- Is committed to relating and working well within the Pacific School of Religion community.
- Possesses interpersonal skills and an inclusive leadership style.
- Has ministerial and/or teaching experience.
- Has organizational skills and is geared for the success of the Swedenborgian House of Studies and the Swedenborgian Church.
- Has administrative experience.
- Understands the importance of technology and its application to education.

Areas of Responsibility

- Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Studies with responsibility for hiring personnel, academic affairs, student life, budgetary preparation and financial management.
- Complete the transition of the Swedenborg School of Religion to the Swedenborgian House of Studies within the Pacific School of Religion,

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March 2001

[Editor's Note: *The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake* was invited to the Portland, Maine Swedenborgian Church as a guest preacher on New Year's Eve. The following is an abridged text of the talk she gave there and is reprinted from their February 2001 *The Appleseed newsletter*.

From Lead to Gold—Spiritual Alchemy

Guest Editorial by Wilma Wake

I was raised in an alcoholic family where there were many kinds of abuse. It took me a long time and many years of 12-Step programs, therapy, and support groups to move beyond the impact that childhood had on my spirituality. It took me a long time to figure out where the Divine was in the midst of trauma.

Our culture, in general, has a lot of difficulty with tragedy. There are two kinds of things we are inclined to say to each other in the midst of trauma which, in my opinion, do not help:

One is: "It's all chosen by the soul. Nothing happens that you didn't choose on some level." This can be a way of blaming the victim—and saying that we deserve our tragedies for we have chosen them.

A similar comment is, "It's all in God's plan; God has a reason for this to happen to you." Imagine saying that to the victims of recent shooting tragedies, or to an abused child. How can one relate to a God who chooses for such tragedy to happen to any of us? This approach to God can make it difficult to trust the Divine or develop a meaningful prayer life.

I have found help in understanding tragedy and the transformations it can lead to by reading Swedenborg's theology and Eastern religions. Swedenborg writes that God gave us free will. God does not choose for us to have bad experiences, but rather allows us to

choose our actions for ourselves. Some human beings choose to do destructive things that bring tragedy to others.

Our free will is a way to engage in our regeneration, our spiritual growth. For Swedenborg, the end result of regeneration was "conjunction," sometimes translated as "union" with the Divine. Hindu yoga has a similar concept. The kundalini energy that lies at the base of the spine moves up through the chakras to unite with Divine energy, so that human and Divine become as one.

For a long time, these deep wisdoms were known as esoteric secrets that were not to be revealed to most of us. Many now say that has changed. Gopi Krishna has written that now is the time for the secrets of Kundalini to become known to all humanity. The Dalai Lama, when asked about revealing the world's esoteric secrets has said, "now is the time." Swedenborg has said that now is the time for us to enter the gateway of knowledge.

In Hindu yoga, the process of the physical joining with the Divine is called transmutation.

The alchemists of the Middle Ages were involved with changing lead into gold; or on a symbolic level, uniting the physical with the Divine. Carl Jung was exploring this area at the end of his life.

In his later writings, Gopi Krishna said that the alchemists of both East and West were on the same path as the practitioners of Tantric Buddhism and Kundalini Yoga.¹

It may be that on some level, the alchemists, Swedenborg, and the Hindu and Buddhist Yogis were saying something similar. The physical can become united with the Divine. We might say that any event of life can be thrown into the fire of transmutation; the fire that turns lead to gold if we let God become part of our healing. I think of my childhood traumas as having been transmuted by Divine energies into greater empowerment and wisdom. The traumas were not God's will; but through Divine energies of healing those experiences were thrown into the fire that can turn anything into a power for healing and wholeness.

I find it important to remember that

God did not cause the tragedies of our world or choose that we should suffer. But God does choose to be with us in the healing, so that the worst of human traumas can be transmuted into a power to change ourselves and our world.

¹ Frederica R. Halligan, "Keeping Faith with the Future: Toward Final Conscious Unity," *The Fires of Desire: Erotic Energies and the Spiritual Quest* ed'd by Fredrica R. Halligan and John J. Shea. New York: Crossroads, 1992, p. 178.

The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is an associate professor at the Swedenborg School of Religion, and author of two recently published books available from the Swedenborg Foundation and J. Appleseed & Co.



Everything on earth [is] beautiful, everything, except what we ourselves think and do when we forget the higher purposes of life and our own human dignity.

—Anton Chekhov

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The Search Is On!

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including such areas as staff employment, library and archive organization, policy and procedure revision.

- Oversee the integration of the Swedenborgian House of Studies curriculum, program, and offerings with the Pacific School of Religion. Serve as liaison with the Pacific School of Religion.
- Oversee the distance education offerings, continuing education, Lay Leader Program, and other certificate programs.
- Maintain a productive working relationship with the Swedenborgian House of Studies Board, denominational committees (e.g. Committee on Admission to Ministry), and other church constituencies.
- Supervise Development, Recruitment, and Alumni Relations. Other duties as assigned by the Board.

As for guest faculty, the committee has been in touch with a number of individuals in Convention and the larger Swedenborgian Church. Although I cannot state specific names at this point, I want to assure you that the number and quality of responses has indeed been a wonder to behold. We truly feel as though God is saying, "These are my gifts for you!" I can assure you that we will have a faculty in place to help prepare future ministers once the move is completed. And, I urge you, "Watch out!" because exciting and positive things are going to happen!

We'll continue to update you as progress is made toward these goals. And please, hold us in your prayers as we continue the transition process toward becoming the Swedenborgian House of Studies.

The Rev. Ron Brugler is president of the Swedenborgian Church and pastor of the Kitchener, Ontario Church of the Good Shepherd.



From Angelish to English, and Back Again

(A digest of a talk presented at the Swedenborg Foundation, January 19, 2001)



George Dole

Swedenborg wrote copiously, and perhaps we should not be surprised. He devoted a chapter of *Heaven and Hell* to the language of angels; and two of the main points are that this language is profoundly moving (n. 238) and that it is "so full of wisdom that [angels] can in a single word express what we cannot say in a thousand words" (n. 239). In n. 155 of his *Spiritual Experiences* (which is a more accurate title than the traditional *Spiritual Diary*), he carried this thought a step further:

I talked with some spirits around me about angels' language and their understanding of things, which the spirits were most eager to know. I told them, having learned it from experience, that we cannot even perceive angels' language because it contains what seem to be innumerable things all at once, things which then had to be laid out in sequence at great length and with all kinds of digressions.

Swedenborg, in other words, was a translator. He was confronted with meaning of unearthly depth and beauty and had to try to convey it in the stubborn stuff of human language. His manuscripts bear witness to the effort this required, with things crossed out, rewritten, written between the lines and in the margins.

He was faced with the necessity of choosing words, with the constant realization that they were less than perfectly adequate. In n. 4585 of *Secrets of Heaven* (*Arcana Coelestia*), he paused in his interpretation of "and they journeyed from Bethel" (Genesis 35:16) to comment on his terminology.

[some readers] will say, "What is this 'inner person'? Can you tell it from the outer? And what is this 'natural' and 'rational'? Aren't they the same thing? And what about this 'spiritual' and 'heavenly'? Is this some new distinction? We've heard about 'spiritual,' but we never heard that 'heavenly' was something different." . . . However, since this is the kind of thing contained in the Word's inner meaning, and since these things cannot be presented without appropriate terms, and since we lack more appropriate terms . . . , we cannot avoid using these words . . .

So after one try at expressing some of this angelic meaning in poetic language (and I can't wait till you see Stuart Shotwell's forthcoming translation of *The Worship and Love of God*), Swedenborg settled down to the task of writing very simply, and at great length, and with lots of digressions, not because he had a prosaic and repetitive mind, but because he was constantly confronting the kind of meaning that melts the heart and blows the mind and simply will not fit in ordinary language.

He wrote in what is now called "Neo-Latin." This was a second language for him, but a far closer second than one might expect. He would have started learning it at kindergarten age. It was the language of all his university courses—not simply of the texts, but of the lectures and discussions. It was the language of international relations, the language of his own international correspondence. He did not translate his thoughts from Swedish into Latin, because Latin was itself a language he could handle with ease and with style. In an early set of fables, he imagined his muse visiting a house where Latin was spoken with true, classical elegance. "If Thou wouldst hear him conversing in the tongue of Latium . . . what pleasures wouldst Thou not derive from his ready-witted speech and genius, what elegance wouldst Thou not delight in, listening to his cultivated utterances . . . Then behold, what language of the purest age, such as Maecenas once used when conversing [with] Augustus!" (Emanuel Swedenborg, *Camena Borea*, ed. Hans Helander [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988], p. 37) Then comes the task of translating Swedenborg's Latin into English. There is an extensive literature about translating, with arguments for and against

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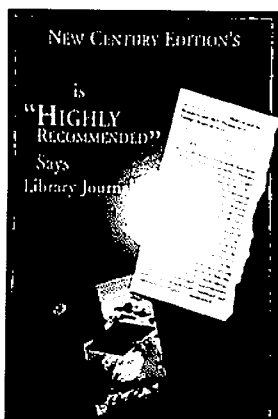
New Century Edition's Heaven and Hell is "Highly Recommended," Says Library Journal

Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell, Drawn from Things Heard and Seen*.

Swedenborg. 2000. C.544p. Tr. From Latin, George F. Dole.

ISBN 087785-475-0. \$49.

Pap. ISBN 0-87785-476. \$15. REL.



"Two Thumbs Up" for
NCE.

"The Swedenborg Foundation has done handsomely by its eponymous visionary with this first volume in a new 25-part set of translations of his work. They

have begun with a fine new translation of Emanuel Swedenborg's most famous work, a description of the many heavens and hells that make up the great 18th-century thinker's cosmology, at once perfectly logical and perfectly eccentric. Swedenborg's afterworld is a kind of reflection and amplification of our own, and his vision of a moving and active collective of heavens, occupied by the very real blessed dead, has been a tremendous influence on Goethe, Emerson, and Jorge Luis Borges, among many others. Dole's translation has the clarity and simplicity of Swedenborg's Latin, and the notes and supplementary material are wonderfully balanced and informative. Highly recommended."

—*Library Journal*
Jan/Feb 2001



From Angelish to English, and Back Again (Continued from page 35)

literalism, "dynamic equivalence," "idiom-to-idiom translation," and the like. There is no "One size fits all." A grocery list calls for a strict literalism that would be disastrous for a poem.

The New Century Edition is, as far as I know, the first edition that has tried to determine and be faithful to Swedenborg's own stylistic priorities, to find English as clear and straightforward as his Latin.

This is not always easy, incidentally. I am fond of the remark of one British scientist-philosopher (I wish I remembered which one) who said he did not feel he really knew a subject until he could write a children's book about it. In my own translating, I have finally reached the point where I do not want to start translating a book or a paragraph until I have read it through. There is probably a single angelic idea there, a single angelic "word," if you will, that holds all the digressions together. I may not often sense just what that "word" is, but I have to give myself the opportunity to do so.

One reviewer wrote of the NCE *Heaven and Hell*, "Fresh and luminous, as though springing from the present moment, Swedenborg's words seemed to flow directly to me without impediment." I cannot read this (it's on the back cover of the paperback edition) without remembering reading the reactions to Edison's first recordings of music—you could scarcely tell, according to the amazed listeners, that the orchestra itself was not right there in the room. I'm delighted with the delight, but I do suspect and hope that in a generation or two, our present efforts will strike people as regrettably scratchy.

Whatever the merits of the translation, though, it is not an end in itself. It is meant to be read, and its real purpose is not realized until in or through it readers catch some glimpse of angelic meaning. The departures from traditional terminology are without exception efforts at greater accuracy; but they are published also with the hope that their very unfamiliarity will make people stop and think. There is nothing abstract about spiritual meaning. It is profound and moving, solid and potent. It is not contained in black marks on a white page. Once the signals are traveling along the optic nerve of the reader, any life that the text may have must come from (or again, more precisely, through) the reader's own heart.

At this point, then, we are talking about the opening of the inner reaches of the reader's mind, and that is accomplished not through intellectual analysis but through living in community, through "acting with prudence, to the end that good may result" (*New Jerusalem* 100). In other words, whatever the language on the page, it takes an angel to translate it back into angelish. Fortunately, the heaven where angels are and the church where we are act in unison, like our own inner and outer natures, so if church people are focused on the good that love can do because of the truth their faith discloses, and on the truth their faith discloses because of the good their love can do, then they are angels as to the inner reaches of their minds (*True Christianity* 1).

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is a noted Swedenborgian author, translator, and a part-time professor of Bible, Language and Theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion. His latest translation is the New Century Edition of Heaven and Hell.



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Wrestling With the Speech of Angels

Stuart Shotwell

[Reprinted from *Rocking the Ages: The Pulse and Continuity of Change* Chrysalis Books, © 2000]

Taller than the others, this man
Walked among them, at a distance,
Now and then calling the angels
By their secret names. . . .
He knew, like the Greek, that the days
Of time are Eternity's mirrors.
In dry Latin he went on listing
The unconditional Last Things.

—JORGE LUIS BORGES,

*Translated by Richard Howard and
Cesar Rennert*

The task in which I find myself in this middle of my ages is full of contradictions and perplexities; but as I grapple with those difficulties, my life flexes and expands, like the muscles of a wrestler, now locked, now stretched, sometimes torn, but over time stronger and stronger. This is the gist of the job: take twenty-five volumes of Latin written over two hundred years ago which has until now been assumed to be “dry” even by lovers of literature as sensitive as the poet Borges—and wrestle it into an English that retains the emotional wealth and haunting simplicity of the original. To be precise, only a little of this task is mine; I work with a team of several translators, all of them more experienced than I am. The works in question are those of the eighteenth-century Swedish “researcher,” Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), whom Borges describes so vividly in the epigraph.

I call Swedenborg a researcher; the usual epithets are “scientist and seer,” reflecting the two main ages of Swedenborg’s life: the period in which he searched for the physical secrets of nature and the rewards of the world, including fame; and the period in which he looked beyond nature and transcended his craving for recognition. In the second of these ages, however, he remained as much a researcher as ever; he only shifted his focus in response to

what he believed to be a divine leading.

My friends and family find my task incomprehensible and in a sense impossible. I see the question in their eyes when I tell them about it. How, they wonder, could anything written in that age which to us, ever looking forward, seems ancient already, become fresh again for readers today? For them, the eighteenth century is dry and sere, an age that is gone forever.

Yet Swedenborg’s era, the Enlightenment, was in fact a bodacious springtime in which the brash promises of the Renaissance at last had their fulfillment. Humankind had become aware once again of one of its most powerful tools, reason, and eagerly applied it to every subject beneath moon and sun, analyzing old hypotheses and coming to staggering new conclusions. Some used reason to test the Bible and declared it a hollow shell; others applied reason to hoary assumptions about government and law and decided monarchy was a baseless and unholy sham; others peered

The translators who brought Swedenborg's thought out of Latin into English in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were creatures of their age as we are of ours; and their translations no more suit us than would their clothing. If we want to have access to this treasury again, we have to find a way to make the springtime of Swedenborg's era blossom again in our own age.

through reason’s lens into science, and saw new worlds swim into view in microscope and telescope. And yet it was also a time of tremendous spiritual renewal that went beyond the confines of reason into matters visionary and poetic.

Swedenborg was the arch-incarnation

of the contradictory passions of this age, uniting its two distinct characteristics, rationality and spirituality. Confident that the time had come for these two to work together, he declared, “Now we are allowed to share in the mysteries of faith through the use of our intellect” (*True Christianity*, paragraph 508). The objects we see around us in everyday life, stones and stars, flowers and grasses, clothing and buildings, correspond to, one could even say in some manner vibrate in tune to, elements of the world beyond ours. Applying those “correspondences” as keys, the intellect can discern the truths hidden beyond the veil of the senses.

The skeptics of his day, bound by their reason, cast doubt on Swedenborg’s visions. Yet even many who questioned his methods recognized that his works were, as they remain, a vast treasury of spiritual and poetic truths. Subsequent thinkers wandered awestruck into that treasury, drew heavily upon it, and never exhausted it; the roll call of their names reads like the list of honored guests at the feast of Western culture: Goethe, Blake, Balzac, Emerson, Strindberg, and Yeats are only a random half-dozen from the head table.

Yet hardly anyone knows of him today. The broad stream of Swedenborg’s influence, though it has flowed through more than two centuries, is running underground and out of sight at the beginning of the twenty-first.

To those who have read Swedenborg lately, the reason behind this disappearance is pretty clear. The translations are too old; many are made up of revisions upon revisions of texts written originally by men who were alive in Swedenborg’s day. Even some modern translations have preserved archaisms and dry, encrusted lumps of “Swedenborgianese” that are meaningless to readers now. All the translations, old and new, are filled with language that, in an unwitting offense to half the human race, consistently misrepresents Swedenborg’s gender-inclusive style.

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Wrestling with the Speech of Angels

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In short, our perception that the early translations of Swedenborg's works are dry and difficult is a result of the tension between disparate ages. The translators who brought Swedenborg's thought out of Latin into English in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were creatures of their age as we are of ours; and their translations no more suit us than would their clothing. If we want to have access to this treasury again, we have to find a way to make the springtime of Swedenborg's era blossom again in our own age.

How do we go about this? Bear with me for some theoretical considerations. Take this curious statement made by Swedenborg in the mid-1700s:

There are two things that seem to be indispensable to our world, because they are inherent in nature: space and time. But in the world beyond ours, these two things do not matter, because there is no space or time, but *state* instead. There the *state of coming into existence* corresponds to what we call *time*. (Condensed from *Arcana Coelestia*, paragraph 2625.)

If this seems far-fetched, consider that one of the consequences of Einstein's theories is that for any particle moving at the speed of light, time does not exist. We may think that a photon that reaches us from a galaxy ten billion light-years away has traveled at the speed of light for ten billion years; but for the photon, no time has elapsed between its emission in some unknown star and the moment it strikes a sensor in the Hubble telescope. One physicist has even suggested that the entire universe is the weaving of a single particle, which transmutes itself instantaneously and infinitely into the dross and gold of countless suns and systems. The physicist's answer to the child who asks, "What was there before the universe existed?" is simply this: Nothing—because there never was a time before the universe existed: current physical theory strongly suggests that time itself did not exist before the material universe blossomed into being.

Like the physicist, Swedenborg says that beyond the world we see, there is no time, there is only a state that has something to do with coming into existence, with springing into being. Swedenborg was, in fact, very fond of a philosophical maxim current in his century to the effect that existing is not a static condition but a constant coming-into-being. Time, which we know as an inseparable part of life on earth, is only our dim mirror of an eternal state, which is a springing into existence. Or, to quote Borges again, who put it somewhat differently: "the days/Of time are Eternity's mirrors."

Our human perception of age, then, is faulty. An age, whether in the life of a civilization or an individual, is not a period demarcated by events. What we see as an age is only a deceptive reflection of a deeper reality, which is a coming into being. As we "age," we come into being in every moment.

To write a new translation for our age out of the urgency brought on by tension with the age gone by is to participate in that eternal leap into existence. Yet in practice translating is a difficult, irritating, unsatisfactory business in many ways. The translator, as a writer, tires of being bound by the original author's idiosyncrasies, limited by another's subject matter; and the constant compromise between the original and the target language is wearing on the self-esteem. Yet one can also experience elation in the process. When I read a great poem aloud, I feel the power of the words as if I had created them; and in the same way, bringing a thought out of another language into powerful English can infuse me with the delight of re-creation. And re-creating, after all, is all any artist ever does.

Then, too, the translator is constantly finding things that have never appeared before. New meanings arise from the reworked soil of thought like lilies released from sleep after years trapped beneath hardpan. The translator says, "Aha!" and lives (for a moment) in the moment, fleetingly experiencing as much of the divine as some would say we are capable of knowing on this earth. This "eureka" moment of discovery we

share with the other "researchers" of humankind, whether they plumb poetry or physics, art or astronomy; and it links us again with Swedenborg.

A translator also has the excitement of finding blossoms hidden in plain sight. One of the great Swedenborg translators, George Dole, was musing in an idle moment with a couple of other scholars on the title of one of Swedenborg's scientific works, *Oeconomia Regni Animalis*. The traditional translation, dating from the nineteenth century, is *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*; yet the work is a study of human physiology and psychology and has little to do with what we would think of as the animal kingdom, as opposed to the vegetable or mineral kingdom. In conjunction with his colleagues, Dole realized that a more accurate translation would be something like *Dynamics of the Soul's Domain*—that is, the interaction of elements of human physiology that lie under the control of the human soul. Each title is an equally plausible translation of the actual Latin words; yet in Dole's new version the meaning suddenly springs to life.

These new meanings are intensely prolific. There is no telling what new translations can sow, what they can fertilize. And each refertilization, each sowing, has to happen anew in each age. John Keats wrote feelingly of the powerful experience of reading Chapman's translation of Homer's poetry—"Never did I breathe its pure serene/Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold." Yet today we would find Chapman's translation stifling. In the early part of the twentieth century, students in schools often read Palmer's translation of the *Odyssey*, a dreary rendering in nineteenth-century prose. Robert Fitzgerald and Richmond Lattimore produced their fresh versions in the 1950s and 1960s, and suddenly students could breathe in Homer's age again. Some of those students went on in succeeding decades to write their own translations, tilling the spring soil again.

Some fear this new fertilization. I know of one high school instructor who was confronted by an angry mother while he was teaching the *Odyssey* in Fitzgerald's translation. That was not

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Wrestling with the Speech of Angels

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Homer, she argued; she had her copy of Palmer in hand to prove it. That last of Palmer's fans, remarkably enough, had been able to see the realms of gold in Homer even when reading of them in that dry old translation. Her reaction is in a way understandable: we become attached to the translations that remind us of our first breath of spring. I myself have struggled in vain to like the translators of Homer who came after Lattimore, though when I consider them objectively I can see how they would appeal to students today. Perhaps in the same way the new translation of Swedenborg will require a new generation of readers.

The upshot of this is the paradoxical notion that in one sense the success of a translation can be measured by how quickly it is superseded. The group that has now come together to retranslate Swedenborg's works would in that respect like nothing better than to be superseded in turn; to see another new English Swedenborg spring into existence in the decades after our efforts are published.

I would like to say, "the group that has begun to come together to retranslate Swedenborg's works," because I hope there will be more who want to join this somewhat frail core of three, or four if I count myself. It is a testimony to Swedenborg's energy that it takes so many of us to render into English the work of only part of his lifetime, and that it requires the resources of an entire nonprofit foundation, with its many active volunteers and staff members, to support a publication project that he managed single-handedly. Of course, it is an axiom that the more people are involved in an undertaking, the more difficult it becomes. Swedenborg at least had unanimity among his staff of one.

The translators have proved, so far, remarkably unanimous. They all want to produce readable English, not yet another dust-dry version. But achieving the simplicity of the Latin of Swedenborg's theological works is not an easy task. And these works are, no matter

how dry and cramped the old translations may make them appear, startlingly simple in the original Latin. I had read them in the old translations first and was astonished when I turned to the Latin, not only by how readily understandable the original is, but at how emotionally accessible it remains even after two hundred years. The Latin descriptions of Swedenborg's experiences in the other world, as well as his earnest and lucid exposition of how we should live together in harmony in this, are often deeply moving—life-shaking, one might say. One could compare it to the speech of angels, as described by Swedenborg himself:

Because the speech of angels corresponds to their emotional basis, which is one of love, and because love in heaven means loving God and loving our neighbor, it is clear how elegant and pleasing their speech must be. It reaches not only the ears, but the inner depths of the minds of those who hear it.

...These works are, no matter how dry and cramped the old translations may make them appear, startlingly simple in the original Latin. I had read them in the old translations first, and was astonished when I turned to the Latin, not only by how readily understandable the original is, but at how emotionally accessible it remains even after two hundred years. The Latin descriptions of Swedenborg's experiences in the other world, as well as his earnest and lucid exposition of how we should live together in harmony in this, are often deeply moving—life-shaking, one might say. One could compare it to the speech of angels, as described by Swedenborg himself.

There was a certain hard-hearted spirit. An angel spoke with him; and by the angel's speech he was ultimately so affected that the tears flowed from him. He said that he could not restrain them; that love was speaking; and that he had never wept before. (*Heaven and Hell*, paragraph 238)

When I think of translating this "speech of angels," of bringing the profound emotional basis of Swedenborg's work into English along with the denotations of the words—sometimes I shake my head along with my friends at the boldness of the attempt.

In translating, my icon is the Swedenborg of Borges' poem: a man striding beside the angels, calling them by their secret names. When I reread a passage after translating, I test it against my image of that man. Would he approve? I try it by weighing its power, its ring, against the voice I have heard in the Latin. If I feel that emotional tingling, that whisper of the angel's language (in the words) then I think that Swedenborg would be pleased. I think then that Swedenborg will be retitled and rise again from the earth, refreshed and vital in his new English verdure; that his age will find another springtime in ours.

Perhaps the new translations will succeed in conveying this emotional basis, and perhaps they will only be partially successful; perhaps it will remain for the next age to achieve this complete revivifying of the English text.

In the meantime, we are making at least this contribution: we are annotating the translations to explain the context in which Swedenborg's works arose, so that readers can better understand the age from which he sprang into existence. Even though he is often seen as a divinely inspired revelator, the terms in which he spoke were those he had acquired in very earthly study of Neo-Platonism, of science, and of the literature of his day.

The surprising thing is that seeing what his age was like, and what his part in it was, makes him that much more alive in our age. After all, we are all individuals living in an age. And living out a series of ages within our own lifetimes. The points at which these multiple ages connect or

(Continued on page 44)

Exploring the Future of Women's and Men's Roles in the General Church

Susannah Currie

On December 14th, 2000, I had the honor of being invited to celebrate worship with a group of women and men who are bravely exploring the future of women's and men's roles within the General Church. In a beautiful chapel in a private home near Bryn Athyn, we celebrated Advent with song, prayer, Scripture, and reflections on the journey of the Holy Family and the importance of both Mary and Joseph in safely bringing Jesus Christ to birth and growth in the world. "Caritas" is the name this group has chosen, and their hospitality and welcome show that they are true to their name. I wanted to share with all of General Convention my joy at getting to know my Swedenborgian neighbors in Bryn Athyn. I also appreciated being able to extend greetings from our president, the Rev. Ron Brugler and to offer his invitation to share with Convention through *The Messenger*. At this time, Caritas would like to share its Statement of Purpose.

Caritas' Statement of Purpose:

- 1) To seek the Lord's will as we provide opportunities for women and men to pursue their visions of spiritual growth and change in the New Church, including but not limited to: women in the clergy, governance structure, decision-making, and variety in doctrinal interpretation.
- 2) To deepen our understanding of the old and new Testaments and the Writings. To research other religious and secular literature for fresh perspectives. To come to terms with how historical and cultural influences affect our thinking.
- 3) To understand the effects on everyone of the suppression of women in the church.
- 4) To cultivate tolerance and respect for the variety of spiritual paths, and ways to worship, within the New Church.

- 5) To acknowledge the alienation of women and men whose gifts have been lost to the General Church.
- 6) To promote a true understanding of the Lord's Second Coming, so that we can help the church on earth to heal and grow.

Our Philosophy:

We stand for women in the ministry/priesthood of the General Church.

We have a wide spectrum of interpretation of women in the ministry here, from one end of the spectrum that acknowledges that we want ordained and paid women priests in the General Church to the other end of the spectrum, that wonders why we need recognition by a church organization for the ministry that we women already perform as a matter of daily life.

The Rev. Susannah Currie is minister of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos and director of Temenos Retreat Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania.



Days Between

Robert McCluskey

The time of Lent, like the time of Advent, is a time of waiting and preparing. After the work of the world is done, and before it begins again, we are called to reflection, confession, and renewal. This is appropriate and good for these "days between." Days between death and life, darkness and light, the past and the future. We ourselves also seem to be caught in the middle, between ignorance and wisdom, between indifference and compassion, between the press of the world and the grace of God. Between the high, spiritual demands of compassion, justice and truth, on the one hand, and the demands and limitations of our natural existence on the other hand. Lent, the season of repentance,

is a time to consider new ways of bridging the gaps that separate us from God and each other.

Lent is also a time of reconciliation, a time to rekindle and re-focus our efforts toward unity, both within ourselves individually, and among ourselves in our social relationships. A time to practice what we preach more intentionally, to risk ourselves for the sake of justice; or perhaps to preach with less fervor, and allow ourselves to be open to new perspectives. Lent is a time to find that balance within us that sustains and nourishes us, that guides and protects us, that challenges and strengthens us.

The church offers the supreme image of this balance in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A balance between love and wisdom, goodness and truth, and between the Divine and the human, the inner and outer dimensions of our lives. We invite you to use this

time of Lent to share in the stories and teachings, the worship and fellowship of the church; to reflect more deeply, and perhaps in new ways, on our response to God's call to unity, and to open ourselves to the power for spiritual growth that is available to each of us, a "power greater than ourselves." May this time of Lent be for you a time when you move a bit closer toward unity with God and neighbor, to the harmony of the Divine-Humanity reflected in your own life as a spiritual being, a child of God.

The Rev. Robert McCluskey is pastor of the New York New Church in New York City.

Reprinted from the March-April 2000 New York church newsletter.



CONVENTION 2001 REGISTRATION

St. Thomas University—St. Paul Minnesota

"A Swedenborgian Odyssey"

June 27 to July 1

The 177th Convention of the Swedenborgian Church will be hosted jointly by the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church and the Illinois Association.

Transportation: Those flying to Convention will arrive at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Transportation from the airport to St. Thomas University is available for approximately \$15.00. Also note the AMTRAK station is also within a 10-minute cab ride to the campus. City bus service from the airport is available also. Please check your confirmation letter for additional transportation information.

Children's programming: We will provide separate care for children ages 0 to 4 and a more structured program for children from 5 to 12 during scheduled activities from Wednesday evening through Saturday morning.

Adult Social Events: Events will feature an Ordinand Dance and Reception including Big Band music and a dance on Friday evening, so bring your dance shoes (fancy dress is optional). A dinner cruise on the Mississippi is the Saturday night feature and optional Saturday venues include the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Children's Museum, the Como Zoo and Conservatory, and of course the Mall of America, Minnesota's monument to consumers. We do encourage you to either come one day early or stay one day late to take in the full experience of the Mall which includes Camp Snoopy, an underwater park and more shopping than anyone can handle. Early/late stays of one day are possible, please indicate that on your registration form below. Educational programs to be announced.

Payment: All registrations and payment must be received by June 1.

Accommodations: The weather in Minnesota during Convention may be anywhere from cool, to downright warm. St. Thomas offers a variety of accommodations. Morrison Hall contains mini-apartments with four single lockable bedrooms, two bathrooms, a furnished living area, and small kitchenette. Four apartments share a common laundry and cooking area. The John Paul II and Murray Residence dorm areas are available in single, double, and quad accommodations with bathrooms down the hall. The apartments and one set of dorms are air-conditioned. All accommodations are handicapped-accessible, parking is nearby and there are no hills. Most of the buildings used by Convention are interconnected by underground access. St. Thomas campus has a small store, beauty/barber shop, exercise room, computer room, post office, bookstore and many other amenities in close proximity to the areas we will be using for Convention.

(Detach here)

Names:

Names and ages of children accompanying you:

Street address: city and state: zip:

Phone: Arrival Departure No. of nights: email

Adult registration	@ \$65.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____
Teen registration (13-17)	@ \$35.00	x teens _____	= \$ _____
Child 3-12 registration	@ \$20.00	x children _____	= \$ _____
Registration family maximum	@ \$175.00		= \$ _____
Late fee if mailed after May 15	@ \$25.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____

Morrison Quad Suite: room & board: double	@ \$66.00	x persons _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Morrison Quad Suite: room & board: single	@ \$66.00	x persons _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Dorm: room & board: single	@ \$58.00	x persons _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Dorm: room & board: double	@ \$50.00	x persons _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Dorm: room & board: quad	@ \$43.00	x persons _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Day Commuters (room use and food)	@ \$30.00	x persons _____	x days _____	= \$ _____
Women's Alliance Luncheon	@ \$ 8.00	x persons _____		= \$ _____

Total

\$ _____

All charges are in US dollars. All bills must be paid in full by June 1. No registration refunds after June 1. Bills may be paid by VISA and MasterCard, Provide number and four-digit expiration date.

Make check payable to The Swedenborgian Church

Send Form with checks to: Central Office, The Swedenborgian Church, 11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460

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

Please note, since food is served cafeteria style we may not be able to accommodate all dietary needs.

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Carla Abler-Erickson at (651) 224-0223 (evenings) or via Internet at Honeybeads@aol.com.

CREATING SACRED INNER SPACE

PRE-CONVENTION CONFERENCE 2001
SUNDAY JUNE 24, 7:30 PM THROUGH JUNE 26, 2001

FACILITATORS

Lorraine Sando, psychotherapist, artist, trainer-consultant, writer from Seattle, Washington
Laura Lawson Tucker, early childhood educator, group facilitator, and trainer of all ages, Guilford, Vermont

ALSO GUEST PRESENTERS

CONTENT:

- Find your sacred inner space as we connect and create sacred community
- Share, dialogue, and learn
- Make art, music, singing, drama, movement, and more
- Create rituals that deepen and celebrate our connections to the earth, to the heavens, and each other
- Bring: Favorite poems, quotes, objects, pictures
- Cost: \$75.00
- Who should come: Anyone interested in spiritual growth.
- *Minister's spouses are welcome. This workshop will take place at the same time as the Council of Ministers meeting*

REGISTRATION

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY, STATE, PROVINCE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____

REGISTRATION: \$75.00 Per Person (*by June 1*)

ROOM & BOARD: (*Please check one*)

- ☐ Dorm Single Occupancy \$58.00 ☐ Dorm Double Occupancy-2 people in a room \$50.00 per day per person
☐ Quad Suite Single or Double Occupancy \$66.00

ARRIVAL: I/we will be arriving by car _____, airplane (list dates, airline, and flight times)

(*Please see CONVENTION REGISTRATION for more details*)

SPECIAL NEEDS: (Please Specify) _____

☞ *Please Note: This Workshop Will Be Taking Place at the Same Time as the Council of Ministers Meeting and Ministers' Spouses Meeting*

Make checks payable to: **THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH**

Send Form with
checks to:

Central Office
The Swedenborgian Church
11 Highland Avenue
Newtonville, MA 02460

SCYL Winter Retreat

Greetings to all you Swedenborgians out there in Messengersland. I am writing you about our most recent SCYL retreat, the Winter Retreat, at Almont, December 27-30. This year we had a group smaller than usual, about 25 people, less than half under 18. However, small numbers don't mean small amounts of fun, or learning. We did well even with the unfortunate cancellation of some clergy and learned a planning lesson for next year, when no minister will be told that we have enough help.

Our topic this year was "Faith and Healing." We started with a discussion of "what is faith," then discussed and/or practiced some healing methods, and ended with a lesson on "faith healers." We all would like to thank Sue Frid from Kitchener, who came to give a demonstration of Therapeutic Touch (which we decided was a misnomer because it actually involves little or no physical contact.)

As a result of the small number of teens, League elections were difficult this year, and there was much talk of returning to holding elections at convention. This was one of only many issues that are to be discussed among the youth at convention this year in St. Paul. If your church has any teens interested in coming to convention this year, I would ask that your congregation do whatever possible in order to get them there. There are big changes occurring, and we need as many teen voices and opinions represented as possible. There was also exciting talk about a new retreat, at a *neutral* location, to try and break away from the regionalized retreats that we seem to have now (this is still in the idea stage, however).

The newly elected officers are:

President Craig Carson
 Central States Officer Akia Harris
 East Coast Officer Benjamin Currie
 West Coast Officer Elliot Bazzano
 Canadian Officer Matthew Fleming
 CBS Editors Andrew Scordato-Yenetchi and Jamin Fox

Our new CBS editors (Jamin Fox, jcfox2@email.bsu.edu, and Andy Scordato-Yenetchi, 1212 1/2 Lincoln Way, LaPorte IN 46350, or, APSY2@yahoo.com) have promised that they will be publishing this year, and have also made it clear that they will be expecting lots of stuff to print (that means us, teens!).

There also needs to be a big thankyou to the new youth coordinator, Sage Currie, for her work in organizing an excellent retreat, which was also her first retreat to manage.

We had our traditional communion service, then pizza and a dance, and the next day we left for home, already looking forward to the next time we will see one another.

*Matthew Fleming
 Canadian Regional Representative
 Romeo, Michigan*



Back: Elliott Bazzano, Eric Vann, Geoff Williams. 2nd row: Akia Harris, Jamin Fox, Freda Rohrer, Frank Rohrer, Matthew Fleming. 3rd row: Yumi Harris, Joy Fox, Jared Fox, Heather Fick, Sage Currie, Elizabeth Jordan, Erica Vann, Missy Sommer, Mindy Jester. 4th row: Chris Hamilton, Craig Carson, Bill Baxter, Amy Halle, Karl Jukiuk, Kurt Williams, Arianne Halle, Rev. Eric Hoffman. Front: Carrie Carson, Andy Scordato-Yenetchi, Betsy Lau, Benjamin Currie also attended as a retreator. Rev. Renee Billings led a session, and Sue Frid of the Kitchener church presented a session on Therapeutic Touch.

GENERAL CONVENTION: NOMINATING COMMITTEE SLATE 2001

Vice-Pres.	1	Christine Laitner	(Michigan)
Secretary	1	Gloria Toot	(Ohio)
Treasurer	1	Larry Conant	(Massachusettes)
GC	3	Duane Beougher	(Illinois)
		Charles Winter	(Ohio)
		Rev. Harvey Tafel	(Pacific Coast)
COMSU	1	Susan Poole	(Middle Atlantic)
EDSU	1	Susan Hemmerich	(Canada)
FPRSU	1	Jennifer Lindsey	(Pacific Coast)
MINSU	2	Karen Conger	(Pacific Coast)
		Carl Blenkin	(Middle Atlantic)
IMSU	1	Robert Hinrichs	(Pacific Coast)
NOMCOM	1	(Two to be nominated. One to be elected)	
		Mary Crenshaw .	(Michigan-Pacific Coast)
		Laurie Turley	(Maine)
SSR	1	Sue Burns	(Illinois)
		Melinda Jester	(Illinois)
CAM	2	Pat Tukos	(Illinois)
		Rev. Marlene Laughlin	(Pacific Coast)

TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor
Title Clarification

Dear Editor:

I wish to thank the Rev. Dr. James Lawrence for his very comprehensive, excellent and kindly review of my book, *Spirituality That Makes Sense*, in the December *Messenger*.

There is only one comment I would like to make—to set the record straight with regard to the history of the title. The title I had originally used when preparing the work for publication was *A Religion That Makes Sense*. Then a letter in *New Church Life* written by a young student made me think again. She said that young people were not interested in *religion*, but they were

interested in *spirituality*. I at once went to the computer and made the change. So the title submitted to the Swedenborg Foundation from the very beginning was *Spirituality That Makes Sense*.

However, the text kept referring to the New Church—because the work was an elaboration of “The Faith of the New Church,” as set out in *True Christian Religion* 2 and 3. The editors at the Foundation preferred *The New Christianity* instead of the New Church, as the Swedenborg Foundation is not a church. That seemed a reasonable request, so I agreed to it. But *The New Christianity* was never considered as a title for the whole work.

My hope is that this book will help seekers find what they are looking for, so that they may believe with their eyes open. What started me on the search many years ago was the dictum, “Believe even if you don’t understand!”

—Rev. Douglas Taylor
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania



Keck to Speak at Stonehouse March 19

Author L. Robert Keck, whose latest book *Sacred Quest: The Evolution & Future of the Human Soul* was recently published by the Swedenborg Foundation under their Chrysalis Books imprimatur, is giving a talk at the Stonehouse March 19.

“Daily, even momentarily, we experience a world of chaos, paradigm shifts, and faith quakes. Where is all this chaos taking us? Are we going to hell in a handbasket, or are we experiencing the simultaneous birthing and dying in the womb/tomb of a Soul in transformation?”

Dr. Keck will explain why it is the latter, based upon twenty-two years of his original research into the DNA of Soul—the embedded coding that shapes what we value and why we think and act as we do. Keck, an evolutionary theologian, is the author of three books, including the best-selling *Sacred Eyes*.



Wrestling with the Speech of Angels

(Continued from page 39)

veer asunder are mapping points in our attempts to partake of our humanity; and these mapping points can be traced in relationships, in art, in learning, in all the myriad human endeavors we pursue. Each of the contributions in this volume of the Chrysalis Reader arises out of the tension between ages, between our own and others, or between our own era and other eras, other times. Each piece here shows us as human beings “rocking the ages”—pushing and pulling against the limitations of one age, seeking the freedom of another; retilling, refertilizing, remaking ourselves in the mirror of eternity, as Swedenborg would tell us we will one day remake ourselves in the world beyond.

Stuart Shotwell is a professional writer and editor who lives in Lubec, Maine, the easternmost point in the United States. He received his doctorate in classical philology in 1984, and now serves as the managing editor of the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg, forthcoming from the Swedenborg Foundation. He would like to acknowledge the support of Jonathan S. Rose, the series editor of the new translation, whose ideas on translating Swedenborg have been so inspirational that “it would be difficult in some cases,” Dr. Shotwell says, “to remember that they were not originally my own.”



J. Appleseed Introduces New Website

J. Appleseed & Co. introduces a new website on Johnny Appleseed and spiritual growth literature. You can find us at www.jappleseed.org.

Sponsored by the Communications Support Unit, our new website features educational information about Johnny Appleseed’s life story, with particular focus on his spiritual world view. We also provide links to other sites for both Johnny Appleseed and for Swedenborgianism in general.

I hope you will take the time to visit our website in the near future. Not only will you discover fascinating details about Johnny’s life, but perhaps a new appreciation of how his advocacy of Swedenborg’s writings were at the forefront of America’s frontier expansion. An online catalogue is available for procuring books, pamphlets, and children’s books that explore the same spiritual realm that inspired one of the great figures of the American frontier.

Getting visibility on the internet is a tremendous challenge, and connecting with other sites is a primary strategy. If you know of a website with which it makes sense to share a link, please let me know.

Rev. Jim Lawrence, manager
J. Appleseed & Co.
3200 Washington St.
San Francisco, CA 94121
email: jfl@dnai.com



Editor's Note: *The following response was originally sent in reply to a question from a new Our Daily Bread subscriber, then was posted in the Swedenborg news online discussion group.*

The Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ

Lee Woofenden

In your letter, you mention reading in the "Swedenborg 101" pamphlet my statement, "... Rather, we see the Lord Jesus Christ as one with God the Father, just as we are taught in the Gospels." And then you ask why Jesus also addresses the Father as though he were a separate being, and further, why he would address another aspect of himself in terms of being his Father.

This is an excellent question! And if you come to an understanding of the issues involved, you will have gone a long way toward grasping the central issue of Christianity: the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is something that has confused and confounded Christians ever since Jesus walked the earth. And I believe that Swedenborg's writings provide the key that has been missing for all those centuries.

Before delving into that, just a quick observation: we often speak to ourselves, saying things like, "Why did I do that," or, "Now what am I going to do?" And we also speak in terms of our higher and lower selves. Sometimes we even feel estranged from parts of ourselves—whether our higher, spiritual part or our lower, material and physical part, or our emotions, and so on. And yet, though there are many different aspects or "characters" within ourselves, we are still one person. So there is actually a parallel within ourselves to the experience of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.

The bigger answer to your question, though, involves the nature of the incarnation—"the Word becoming flesh," to use the phrase from the beginning of the Gospel of John. In Luke 1:30-35 we find a clear statement that though Mary was Jesus' mother, Joseph was not his father; rather, God was his father. So at the time of Jesus' birth, he had a divine father and a human mother, meaning he had a dual nature: infinite divine and finite human. As to his infinite divine nature, he was one with the Father; but as to his finite human nature, he was a distinct being from the Father.

According to Swedenborg, throughout his lifetime on earth, Jesus was engaged in a process of "glorification," or reuniting with the divine Being within. This process paralleled—though it was at an infinitely higher level—our

own process of "regeneration," or spiritual rebirth.


Just as we sometimes feel closer to God and spirit, and other times feel farther away from them, and more involved in our material selves, Jesus at times felt closer to the Divine nature within, and at times felt more distance. There was an alternation of state with him as part of his process of putting off what was finitely human and replacing it with the infinite divine.

This is why, during his lifetime on earth, he at times would speak to the Father as if to a separate being, while at other times he spoke of the Father as one with himself. When he was in a part of his cycle of glorification at which he was feeling more distant from the indwelling divine nature, he would address it as if it were a separate being. But when he was in the part of the cycle where he felt closer, he would refer to it as one with himself.

This process of glorification continued right up to the crucifixion, which was his final and greatest temptation. On the cross Jesus felt what was perhaps his greatest sense of separation from the divine when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And yet even in that extremity, he was quoting Scripture (Psalm 22), from which to draw strength. Through that final temptation, he completely put off all that was left of the finite human from Mary and made all of his human infinitely divine and entirely one with the divine Being within—which the Gospels, from their in-process perspective, call the "Father."

Because of this, the resurrected Jesus no longer had a dual nature but was completely divine from the highest level right down to the physical level. Yet he was also completely human. Swedenborg uses the term "Divine Human," or "Divine Humanity," to describe this completely united Divinely Human being that is the risen and glorified Jesus Christ. Jesus himself expressed this glorified state when, after the resurrection, he said to his disciples, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). This, as Swedenborg points out, is Divine power, and could not be given to him unless he was now one with the Divine being. (Otherwise God would have no power left, it all having been given to Jesus.) The vision of Christ at the beginning of Revelation is also a vision of a glorified and infinitely powerful Jesus Christ.

As Swedenborgians, we generally no longer refer to Jesus as "the Son of God," since we believe that he was now completely reunited with the Father, yet bringing the glorified human with him. So we will sometimes use the phrase "The Lord God Jesus Christ," referring to the one God of heaven and earth who is both transcendent (above our consciousness and ability to grasp) and immanent (present personally with us).

The Rev. Lee Woofenden is pastor of the Bridgewater Swedenborgian Church in Bridgewater, Mass. 

Dear Mr. Swedenborg:

A question about the New Church view on the Trinity: We read that Divine Love itself is God, and love is revealed and imaged most overtly (in human terms) in what we refer to as the feminine and also the females of creation. We also read that the "Father" aspect of God's Being is none other than this Inmost (or Essence) of Divinity, while the "Son" refers to Divine Truth shining out from that Love, and the "Holy Spirit" to Divine Power or Operation thence derived. So, why is it more accurate and useful to maintain the traditional Christian usage of Father when we refer to the Inmost Divine, rather than Mother? Is there an inconsistency here?

Answer:

What a lovely and *thorny* question ...I love it! Swedenborg's theology would say no, whereas I would say without question, yes. We could avoid this whole issue of gender specific pronouns in reference to God simply by pretending that they aren't relevant. However, this would ignore that basic Christian theology deals often with gender specific references to God. We know for certain that Jesus Christ was male, and that He made use of a very personal and affectionate Aramaic term for His Inmost Being, which was Abba, and is translated today to mean Daddy or Father. The Trinity reflects the three basic qualities of the one Lord: Divine Love, Wisdom, and Power (or Presence)—just as every human being has a soul, body and effect in life. Christianity is very open to gender neutral terms for God, but to ignore gender specific terms would be to ignore a basic aspect of our history and heritage, and also the deep goodness that they obviously contain. Sometimes, for example, I deeply feel the need to call God Father, Lord, and Jesus, or Christ.

It is good to note, at this point, that the Bible does include references to God that reflect a feminine or female nature, such as when Jesus said that He cared for Jerusalem the way that a mother hen broods over her chicks (Matt. 23:37-38). And also in the first

Ask Swedenborg

creation story in *Genesis* where we read, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (1:27)

Swedenborg's explanation as to why he believed it was right to use "Father" in reference to the Inmost Divine aspect of the Trinity had to do with his view of the spiritual structure of maleness, in that men have love in our inwardness, with rationality (and perhaps wisdom) in the outward or external aspects of our mind/being. With women this structure is reversed. Thus, since God's inmost being is Divine Love, he understood it made the most sense to maintain the use of the term Father, as Jesus did in the Gospels.

Swedenborg also understood, however, that each gender has its primary correspondence—women to love and men to wisdom. This is due to what quality is most apparent and most keenly felt or perceived in each gender. I believe his theology is inconsistent by using Father in reference to the Inmost


♦ ♦ ♦
*"Revelation comes in waves;
God knows when humanity
can handle certain new and
challenging viewpoints."*

Divine (or Divine Love), instead of Mother. It is beautifully clear in his theology that the Inmost or Essence of Divinity is Love or Goodness...and, that it is so very good and useful for us to connect and relate with this in the Divine. Our salvation rests, most deeply of all, in opening up to the reality of Love—feeling it, knowing it, adoring it and offering it. Truth often helps us find love, and love is always wanting to express itself in truth. However, what regenerates and saves people is being

deeply conjoined with God's Love.

Therefore, I am going to be bold and honest with you, my readers, and offer that I think it is highly possible that Swedenborg may have been overly influenced by his culture and time. Or, perhaps, that God simply held back with Swedenborg in regard to this issue of using Mother as a good and useful alternative to Father within the Trinity. I'm one who believes that revelation comes in waves; God knows when humanity can handle certain new and challenging viewpoints. There is evidence in the Bible that God reveals God's Self to us in new ways as humanity evolved—the Incarnation is, perhaps, the most obvious example. So much of Swedenborg's vastly consistent theology was revolutionary for that time period. It may have been too much for eighteenth century Christians to handle to look at the Inmost Divine in feminine terms. I believe it is good for us "Trinitarians" in the New Church to enjoy a righteous balance toward the Divine, by using both feminine and masculine gender terms at times. I feel that calling God Mother would help our generally hard-hearted race to soften more easily. Also, it might even have a healing and growth-producing effect in society toward helping women return to being as equally esteemed as men (although much improvement has happened already here, to be sure).

Certainly, there is nothing wrong with using Father whenever we feel the need. In fact, I can see some important spiritual and theological reasons for why this is so. Please feel free to respond to me with your own reactions to what I've written.

The Rev. Kit Billings is pastor of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul. "Ask Swedenborg" is a regular feature in the Virginia Street church newsletter, from which this is reprinted. Kit was kind enough to email this to me ahead of his February 2001 newsletter printing, so it is "hot off the press." If you have a theological question that you would like addressed in the newsletter, please email it to: or to the Rev. Kit Billings, Virginia St. Swedenborgian Church, 170 Virginia Street, St. Paul, MN 55102 

Church Calendar Dates

Feb. 15-18	SSR Board Meeting San Francisco, California
Feb. 25-Mar. 1	Edfest Carefree, Arizona
Mar. 8-11	MINSU Deland, Florida
Mar. 16-18	General Council Washington, DC
Apr. 5-8	EDSU Temenos
May 16-17	COMSU Temenos
June 24-July 1	Convention 2001 St. Paul, Minnesota

NEW ADDRESS

Jenn Tafel
117 Cotton Avenue
Braintree, MA 02184
(617) 470-6028 (cell)
(no email as yet)

BIRTH

Holczer—Justice Ashleigh Holczer, born December 31, 2000. Parents are Susan and Steve Holczer of Surrey, B.C., Canada. Grandparents are Alan and Sharon (Reddekopp) Williams; great-grandparents are Erwin and Lisa Reddekopp.

BAPTISM

Collanton—Alex Richard Collanton, son of Roger and Mary Ann Collanton and grandchild of Esther Nicastro-Capon, was baptized into the Christian faith December 24, 2000, during a Christmas Eve family gathering at the Collanton residence in Martinez, California, the Rev. Edwin G. Capon officiating.

CONFIRMATIONS

Adams, Bailey, Groezinger, Jones, Kimpton, Kraft, Park, Rogich, Severson, Sidel—Daniel and Lisa Adams, Janet Bailey, Maria Groezinger, Henirk Jones, Marcia Kimpton, Joe Kraft, Lea Park, Margo Rogich, Todd Severson, and Pam Sidel were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church January 28, the Rev. Drs. James Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating.

Putnam—Len Putnam was confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound in Kirkland, Washington, December 17, 2000, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

MARRIAGE

Brown & Siddell—Pamela Brown and Ron Siddell, members of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, were united in marriage September 9, 2000, in Mukilteo, Washington, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

DEATH

Hicks—Joyce Hicks, longtime member of the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, entered the spiritual world January 21, 2001, after many years of battling cancer. A graveside service was conducted January 24, the Rev. Carl Yenetchi officiating, and a memorial service took place the following Sunday, January 28. Joyce is survived by her son, David Hicks, and three sisters; Nezera Mrozinski, who is still active in the church, Alice Lipke, and Constance Reynolds.



Community Building Workshop at Kemper Road Center

John Billings

Editor's Note: *The following notice went out to congregations and to The Messenger by email January 23rd. Unfortunately, due to our deadlines, it was received too late for most Messenger readers to try to attend if they were seeing it for the first time, but the notice is being reprinted here to inform readers that it is taking place. You may want to request information for future reference. A report on the workshop will be published in the May Messenger.*

On more than one occasion I have spoken of the value and importance of having a strong sense of community in both our Council of Ministers and in our congregations. Well, we're getting pretty excited here at Kemper Road Church in Cincinnati because we are going to sponsor a real live community building workshop (CBW) on the first weekend in March, 2001.

This will not be a lecture about com-

munity, will not be didactic in any way. It will be an effort, as are all community building workshops, at having the EXPERIENCE of real community.

The two facilitators are Scott Peck-trained leaders. I've been to a CBW where they were the leaders and they were wonderful. We feel very fortunate to have them again. Harolyn Boulware is a therapist from Maryland and the Rev. Dr. Kurt Keljos is a chaplain at Ohio State University in Columbus. Both are well trained and are excellent as community building facilitators.

The program will begin at 7 P.M. Friday evening March 2nd, and conclude about 4 or 5 P.M. Sunday March 4th. We have been very creative in the cost area, so the cost per participant will only be \$125. If registration is completed by February 15th, then the cost will only be \$115.00. For registration you may email Chuck Giesler at Gieslerce@msn.com or call him at 513-793-4623.

If you have any interest in com-

munity building this would be a good opportunity to experience it first hand, either for yourself or for some central person(s) in your congregation. It has made a tremendous difference in our congregation. In Swedenborgian terms, what it really does is bring a genuine sense of "charity" to the group and makes it real—makes it alive. One of the "techniques of charity" we've heard about before. Definitely part of the second coming in my view.

If any of you want to attend or any of your parishioners, you or they can probably stay with KRSC parishioners to hold costs down, assuming we don't have an avalanche of interest. If you want a brochure sent, just let Chuck or me know and we'll send it out right away. Time is close at this point.

The Rev. John Billings is pastor of the Kemper Road Center Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati. He has been a proponent of Community Building for a number of years.



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.

Harry Potter, a Spiritual "Everyboy"

Review of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter book series

Reviewed by Susannah Currie

What is it about the young wizard Harry Potter that inspires so much interest and enthusiasm in readers young and old? Until I read the first book in the series, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, I would have assumed it was due to media promotion and hype. Once I began to read however, the series, which includes *The Chamber of Secrets*, *The Prisoner of Azkaban* and *The Goblet of Fire*, is hard to put down, and its appeal isn't easy to articulate. There is a powerful attraction that is almost *magical*! Given the choice of packing the hardcover volumes I borrowed from a friend, or my clothes, into my backpack to travel from Maine to Pennsylvania, I found myself tossing my clothes into the Goodwill box so the books would fit!

The world, according to author J.K. Rowling, is populated by wizards, half-wizards and non-magical human beings she calls 'muggles.' It is only those who are aware of the wizarding world who can visit certain places like the village of Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley, where magical candies and school supplies are found. Only they can ride certain modes of transportation like the Hogwarts Express, a train which departs London's ordinary King's Cross Station from the not-so-ordinary platform #9 ¾.

In the world of Harry Potter, who discovers his wizardry potential on his eleventh birthday, wizards and magical creatures live by rules of non-interference in the 'muggle' world. They live by their own laws and government that restrict their magical powers in an attempt to ensure that only

good and wise magic be practiced. In this world, magic is a learned art and young wizards are trained in schools. Harry's adventures begin when he starts his education at Hogwarts School for wizards. There he makes both friends and enemies as he learns to enhance and focus his magical powers. The world of Harry Potter is a world where both good and evil are acted out on a large scale and the damage, and the good, that can be done is tremendous. Harry has some close calls with a variety of powerful evil wizards and it reveals his character as he grows through these adventures. Harry Potter, unloved and unwanted by his relatives in the 'muggle' world, becomes an inspiration to his classmates and teachers as a boy of humility, loyalty, courage, and strength.



Does this sound familiar? A world that exists simultaneously with our natural existence, that we walk right past yet don't see? It is a wonderful correspondence to the reality of our daily walk in the natural and spiritual worlds. Harry's struggles against the narrow-minded cruelty of his 'muggle' relatives, his rejection of the meanness of spirit of some of his classmates, and his dedication to helping his friends correspond nicely to the challenges of living a life of regeneration. Harry most definitely is striving to be a 'good' wizard. Like ourselves, he recognizes our human potential for following an 'evil' path led by love of self and love of domination.

Harry is a spiritual "everyboy" and it is a treat to watch him grow. I hope that there will be more Harry Potter books on the horizon. And if you haven't yet, I suggest you take a ride on the Hogwarts Express at Platform 9 ¾ and fly into the dual reality of the spiritual and the natural. It's well worth the trip!

The Rev. Susannah Currie is the pastor of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos and director of Temenos Retreat Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

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