

What Does it Mean to Be A Swedenborgian?

Installation of the Edmonton Pastor

by Sharon Williams

The Western Canada Conference held its 101st Annual General Meeting in Edmonton, Alberta, June 14–15, 2008. The meeting always concludes following the church service on Sunday. This year the concluding service was even more memorable as Rev. David Fekete was formally installed as pastor of the Edmonton New Church Society, Church of the Holy City.

We were honored to have Chris Laitner, president of General Convention, as our guest. She installed Rev. Fekete, while mother, Joyce Fekete, sister, Joy Zimmer and nephew, Matthew Fleming proudly sat in the front row of the church.

It was a moving ceremony. The president of the Edmonton Society, Barry Reed, gave a short talk, relating the fact that he had quit coming to church regularly, but upon meeting pastor Dave, decided it was a church he wanted to come back to.

Tears were very close to many eyes. The sermon was very fitting, letting each of us determine where we were as Swedenborgians. Randy Runka soloed with Cat Steven's "Cat's in the Cradle," allowing those unshed tears to fall on this Fathers Day.

Sharon Williams is president of the Western Canada Conference.

Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete

[This article is a version of the sermon Rev. Fekete gave at the Western Canada Conference Annual Meeting.—ed.]



I perceive three ways in which a person can be considered a Swedenborgian. All three ways relate to what a person is committed to. First there is commitment to the Swedenborgian

Church as an organization. Second, there is commitment to the 30 volumes of theology that Emanuel Swedenborg wrote. Third, there is commitment to the truth at the heart of Swedenborg's theology, whether it is found in Swe-

denborg's writings or elsewhere. One may be a Swedenborgian in all three of these ways, or in one or two of them. I think that

all three are appropriate. People have different needs and wants from their church. So I thought I'd share my reflections on just what it means to be a Swedenborgian.

Let's begin by considering a commitment to the Swedenborgian Church as an organization. Some of us were born into the church. Indeed, some members can trace their ancestry to the very founders of the Swedenborgian

Church. People who are committed to the organization may or may not be committed to Swedenborg's doctrines. In the General Convention we have many new members who are attracted to this church because of its open-mindedness to different approaches to religion. They feel free to pursue their religious quest according to their unique theological interests, and they perceive that this church encourages free thought. Some of these Swedenborgians are little acquainted with Swedenborg's actual theology. Others who are committed to the organization come to this church because they feel welcome and like the fellowship of this church. They find here a sense of community and acceptance. They like the people in this church and consider the church their spiritual home.

"Each way offers something meaningful, according to the personality and needs of the individual."

Then there are Swedenborgians who are committed to Emanuel Swedenborg's theology. In the 30 volumes that Swedenborg wrote they find deeply rewarding spiritual truth. They find a theology that makes sense. They find a way of living thought that leads to peace and serenity. Some of those who are committed to Swedenborg's theology do not feel a need to make a commitment to the organization. I know several dedicated readers of Swedenborg who are not members of a church. Indeed, some of

continues on page 121

In This Issue:

Reports from Fryeburg and Paulhaven Camps • Book Review: *Heart, Head & Hands*
Thinking Like Angels: Graduation Address • Pluralism and the New Church
Annual Meeting of the Women's Alliance

The Editor's Desk



Catching up on a busy summer, this issue of *The Messenger* carries several more articles from the Annual Convention held in Bridgewater, Massachusetts in July, and articles from Fryeburg and Almont summer camps and the installation of the Edmonton New Church's pastor.

Both Rev. Fekete, in his article, "What it means to be a Swedenborgian," (page 113), and Rev. Dole in his article on religious pluralism and the New Church (page 119) touch

on issues of great interest and concern to many Swedenborgians—religious identity, religious community, inclusiveness, and exclusiveness.

With some trepidation, I would suggest that everyone faces the same issues in the secular realm of politics. How do we come to terms with issues of political identity and belonging? Do we relate to a political party as a community? How do we deal with our personal disagreements with party or candidate positions. Can Republicans who believe in the right to abortion consider themselves Republicans? Will other Republicans accept them and tolerate their views? Are Democrats who believe abortion is a moral transgression that the state cannot allow be Democrats?

If we draw a bright line that defines who can and who cannot be a member in religion or politics, are we excluding people who could benefit from our message and be valuable members of our communities? But if we believe in our doctrines and commitment, how do we regard those who only subscribe to part of it, or something that looks like it but is expressed differently?

Politicians have a tendency to tout themselves by tearing down their opponents and their opponents' support-

ers. They bend their views and messages to fit the calculus of election success. As members of a small, open-minded denomination, we neither want to tear down others or bend our beliefs and convictions to gain popularity.

Rev. Fekete suggests three ways of welcoming commitment to a church community, without requiring everyone's commitments to be the same.

Rev. Dole challenges us with thought provoking references to see the oneness of humanity in Swedenborg's New Church through a sober evaluation of evidence from recent crises.

We are human, after all, which means we have the capability to express love and wisdom by virtue of the Lord's divine influx. We also, of course, have the capability to express evil by virtue of our freedom to choose whether or not to accept the Lord's influx. And so we continue spiritual explorations in the world we live in.

—Herb Ziegler

Church Calendar

October 4: Michigan Association Annual Meeting • Almont New Church Assembly, Almont, Michigan

October 10–13: SCYL Retreat
Blairhaven Retreat Center, Duxbury, Massachusetts

October 10–11: SHS Board of Trustees • Berkeley, California

October 26: 175th year celebration • Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario

October 31– November 2: Pacific Coast Association 125th Anniversary Annual Meeting • San Diego, California

November 7–8: General Council
Boston, Massachusetts

November 14–15: Retirement Committee

November. 23: Installation of the Rev. Alison Lane-Olson • Pretty Prairie, Kansas

January 30–31, 2009: Wayfarers Board of Managers • Rancho Palos Verdes, California

General Conference Course on Divine Providence

The General Conference of the New Church in the United Kingdom is offering a new course exploring Emanuel Swedenborg's *Divine Providence* called "United Search for Divine Providence" Each lesson will appear on its website, www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk. The goal is to understand more clearly how the Lord's constant care provides for us each moment of our life while respecting our freedom of choice. Lifeline will begin to publish the lessons in October. You will also need a copy of *Divine Providence*.

the Messenger

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

October 2008

Volume 230, No. 8, Whole Number 5333

Editor: Herb Ziegler

Editorial Address:
Herb Ziegler, The Messenger
2 Hancock Place
Cambridge, MA 02139

Tel: 617.491.5181

Email: hziegler@springmail.com

Business and Subscription Address:
The Messenger, Central Office
11 Highland Avenue
Newtonville, MA 02460

Email: manager@swedenborg.org

Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; nonmembers: \$12/year; foreign: \$15/year; gift subscription from a member: \$5/year; single copies: \$1.00.

Deadline for submissions is six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the Communications Support Unit, or represent the position of the Church.

Reflections on FNCA 2008

by Trevor

The biggest thing about this summer's session at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly was that we didn't have a river. Well, we had a river but we couldn't use it. There was so much rain upstream in New Hampshire that our usually placid Saco River was a swollen torrent threatening to spill over its banks for the entire two weeks of camp.

It was actually dangerous. Our beach across the river was under more than three feet of water most of the time, and the current was so powerful before camp started that even our strongest swimmers were swept far downstream before they could get far enough across to touch bottom on the other side. The river police were pulling boats off the river at every bridge, and all the canoe rental places insisted that renters only use their craft on lakes. That's how

strong the Saco was. As the head of the waterfront, I had no choice but to close the river.

Those who needed beach time spent many an afternoon exploring several of the delightful lakes in the area: Conway Lake, Kezar Lake, Lovell's Pond, and Moose Pond. Nearly every afternoon a few carloads of children, teens, and adults left the Assembly grounds in search of still waters. And they returned refreshed and happy.

As the session wore on, the water

level on the river would drop a bit, and then rise again, drop a bit, then rise again, drop a bit, and then rise again. In fact, it rained every single day for the first 10 days of camp. It didn't rain continuously; there was still a bit of sunshine here and there, but it wasn't until part way through the second week that we had an entire day without precipitation.

But despite the fact that we didn't have a river this summer, it was still another excellent year at camp. First week was fairly full and second week was packed. We had wonderful companionship, interesting and educational lectures with discussion afterwards, and quite a few excellent special events that augmented our regular program tremendously.

These included an evening of swing dance (beginning with lessons!); a slide show of India (oh, the architecture); a roundtable presentation and discussion on dyslexia (how come there's only one

continues on page 127



Bill and Louise Woofenden (front row, center) made a special visit on Wednesday afternoon of the second week of camp.

Contents

Installation of the Edmonton	
Pastor	113
What Does It Mean to	
Be a Swedenborgian?	113
The Editor's Desk	114
Church Calendar	114
Reflections on FNCA 2008	115
Book Review: Swedenborg and	
Psychological Well-Being	116
In the "Paulhaven Zone"	117
Thinking Like Angels	118
Religious Pluralism and the	
New Church	119
Annual Meeting of the	
Women's Alliance	124
Poem: Transformation	124
Regional Associates Program ..	126
Passages	127
Philadelphia Library Fund	
Grants	127
SHS Online Course	128



Parachute games led by Trevor on the front lawn for the Sparks and the young at heart.

book review

Swedenborg & Psychological Wellbeing

*Heart, Head & Hands:**An Interpretation of Swedenborg's Writings in Relation to Psychological and Spiritual Well Being*

by Stephen Russell-Lacy

Seminar Books, (London, 2008)

Reviewed by Eugene Taylor

Here is a fine little work, a well made paperback with a painting of an old cellist on the cover, that will warm the hearts of the general public and all practicing Swedenborgians who are of a non-technical bent. Its author is a clinical psychologist from England who purports to have fielded a creative synthesis of Swedenborg's doctrines with cognitive behaviorism, the reigning ideology of scientifically acceptable psychotherapy in Europe and the United States. The book's publisher is the General Conference of the New Church in London, formerly known as The Missionary Society of the New Church.

Leaving for the moment the conundrum of how this work contributes to the dialogue between science and religion, the main focus of the narrative is how to feel better about life from a spiritual standpoint by focusing on one's thoughts and how spiritual beliefs help one to become better adjusted to the vicissitudes of modern society. As Swedenborg himself has claimed, however, there is an internal spiritual meaning to such affirmations of the purely natural world. I would describe the attempt to articulate this interior spiritual domain as an intuitive psychology of character formation at the heart of the author's own experiences.

The author introduces Swedenborg's contribution to personal wellbeing by noting Swedenborg's capacity for extended concentration using

the technique of controlled breathing. In an innovative twist not seen in the traditional New Church literature, the author calls this capacity meditation. Generally, Christians pray; yogi's meditate. So he seems to be capitalizing on the Western philosophical meaning of meditation—as in the meditations of Marcus Aurelius, meaning “to think rationally is to think deeply”—while leaving open the possibility of the Asian idea of meditation, which leads to transformed consciousness. This he follows with comments on mindfulness, suggesting he has also had some experience practicing Buddhist insight meditation, but he does not overtly say so. He recommends from this that one focus on the “eternal now,” neither dwelling on the past nor the future, but remaining present in the immediate moment.

“ . . . we find ourselves understanding a text while feeling that, at the same time, we are liberated by just reading it.”

But then, how does this lead us to Swedenborg? The very title of the work, *Head, Heart, and Hands*, bespeaks Swedenborg's love, wisdom, and use. But then the author lapses into cognitive behavioral language with a discussion of information being all that the client can tell us; other than that, the author asks, what do we really know? But then he goes back to talking about a deeper self, which leads us to an enlightened state of consciousness. With regard to spiritual seeing, the author refers to the domain of science and then the domain of spirit, implying they are two separate domains. One has to pass over the first and experience an opening of the internal spiritual sense to see the

correlation between external things and the interior life. He does not exactly call this correspondences, but it is still a central theme of the book.

This is the direction in the first part of the book. In the beginning the author is overly focused on the neurotic and the normal; spiritual reality is for the author overtly presented as a rational enterprise, as if one could think one's way into the spiritual domain. In that case, a more apt comparison in this section might have been between cognitive behaviorism and Swedenborg's *Rational Psychology*. But towards the end of the book the author freely discourses on overcoming the fear of death and the nature of the after-death plane. He also engages in discussions of communication with spirits, and the similarities between Swedenborg's experiences and those reports that come from psychics or mediums. This is definitely not cognitive behaviorism.

Cognitivists believe in determinism—that we are not free but are conditioned by the environment and circumstances, whereas the author opts for free will, the ability of the individual to choose which way his or her life will develop. Here, the author wears his Swedenborgian hat, not his cognitive and behavioral one. On the issue of free will versus determinism, humorously, he quotes Isaac Bashevis Singer, who said, “We have no choice, we have to believe in free will.” Free will, however, in reality leads us to the mandate of taking personal responsibility for our actions. Cognitive behaviorism, as a reductionistic science, does not admit this connection.

Cognitive behavioral therapy works well with audiences under the control of some authority figure. Children, prisoners, the military, students, and

continues on page 125

In "the Paulhaven Zone" • Paulhaven 2008

by David Fekete

As the camp pastor, I regularly have been asked to teach a confirmation class at Paulhaven Camp. In preparation for this class I thought about what really mattered in Swedenborg's theology. I thought about terms like "the life of charity," "goods of love," "truths of faith," "all religion relates to life, and the religious life is to do good," and other ideas that ministers read about in books. Then it dawned on me. The best way for me to explain all these concepts is to get the class thinking about Paulhaven Camp itself. The special community spirit of Paulhaven and the dear bonds of love that are formed and nurtured there are the best experiences of heavenly life that I could bring to my classes. I found that Paulhaven itself was the best way to get at all those ideas I read about in books.

I brought this up at class. The campers thought for a while, and then their faces positively glowed. Some of the staff members attended classes, too—one, although he had been confirmed in his teens, came to confirmation class because he wanted to learn more about theology. He said that as soon as he turns into the Paulhaven grounds, he is overtaken by a special, magical state—the recollection of a lifetime of Paulhaven Camp experiences. One of the campers called it "the Paulhaven Zone." I liked that.

Then I pressed further. I knew about their friendships and the sports, crafts, and other activities they have so much fun doing. But I asked them, "Do you think you would have that 'Paulhaven zone' without the chapel services? You

can be honest with me." They all said, "No. It wouldn't be the same without chapel."



Paulhaven Camp is for teens between the ages of 10 and 18. We all wake up and eat breakfast together. Then we have a short chapel service and hour-long classes afterward. Then there are sports in which teams compete with each other throughout the camp session. After lunch are crafts, some free time, and more sporting activities. Then, after supper, one of the



A camper enjoys Paulhaven cuisine.

classes takes a turn to do the vesper service and a religious skit. We all gather

around the campfire at night and sing songs that have become favorites over the years. The newer campers are initiated into the inner circle of this treasured bonding ritual. Our theme this year was "A Celebration of Life," seen through the holidays of Christmas, Valentine's Day, Birthdays, Easter, and Thanksgiving Day. The week closed with a fantastic New Year's dance, DJ'd by Justin Runka.

I taught a class of 13-year olds. I talked theology with them for a couple days before I realized that it wasn't working. So I threw away the lesson plans I had made up for teachers at Paulhaven. I asked my class to read John 14 and to pick out a passage that they liked. I wondered how many would come through. Despite all the camp structure and the planned activities, next day they all had found a scripture they liked. We talked about the passages they picked and I asked them why they picked them. I gave them Matthew 4-5 to read for next class. They actually seemed to like having homework. Next day, one 13-year-old girl read her passage to the class. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Wow! The whole Sermon on the Mount and she picked the most precious passage in it. I asked her why she picked it. She shrugged. I decided to talk about what pure in heart means and what it is like to feel God; soon I realized I was wasting my time. The highest celestial angels never discuss theology. That passage spoke to her heart, and there was nothing to say.

I was touched by a rap song the old-

continues on page 126

Thinking Like the Angels: SHS Graduation Address

by Inese Radzins

Dr. Radzins delivered this address at the corporation meeting of the New Church Theological School (Swedenborg House of Studies) held July 3, 2008 in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. The graduating students were Catherine Lauber, and Judith Vandergriff.



Of my kids' favorite books, one is entitled *The Greatest Power*. It is not about

the military or weapons of mass destruction, or any specific war. Rather, it is the story of a young emperor in China, a budding astronomer, who is searching for a wise prime minister.

One of the job requirements for this prime minister is wisdom, knowing what the greatest power in the world is. The young emperor says, "to be wise means that one is able to see the unseen and know the unknown." The emperor invites all the young boys and girls to participate in a quest that culminates in a parade where they will display what they think is the greatest power in the world. Some decide to make displays of weapons, some to show the strength of beauty, other children choose to present money and shape coins, whereas still others showcase Chinese inventions. One little girl alone makes nothing. She simply carries a lotus seed in her hand. When the emperor asks her why she is carrying this one lone lotus seed, she breaks it in half and explains that at the center of the seed lies nothing, which she claims is the greatest power in the world. This

nothing, this empty space held for the little girl, the possibility of *life*.

I believe that this story provides a charge for our graduates, our ordinands, Judith and Catherine: to know the power of life, to see the unseen, and to know the unknown. Much like Swedenborg's writings, this charge, to know the power of life, provokes us to examine inherited ways of living, working and theologizing. For all intents and purposes it *seems* that weapons, beauty, money, and inventions are the real powers in our world.

My hope is that your theological education at the Pacific School of Religion and the Swedenborgian House of Studies has taught you to discern what the real power in the world is. This morning, you both pointed to this power by affirming your call to be pastors of this church; you affirmed this as your faith, your life, and your love.

One of the gifts of teaching is that you get to journey along with your students, to see their joys, struggles, frus-

"For ordination and the life of the pastor requires living non spatially and non temporally in ways that one may not be used to."

trations, and triumphs. They often begin their journeys very timid, not quite sure what seminary will bring. I have seen both Catherine and Judith grow in their time at SHS. Catherine and Judith, it is my hope that your experiences at SHS and PSR have broadened your horizons and helped the Lord seem all the nearer because you have learned to perceive God more deeply and more fully. It has been a joy and a privilege to watch your journeys. I still recall Judith's reflections on *Heaven and Hell* and her delight in comparing Swedenborg to other theologians; I de-

light in her willingness to learn. I can still remember the look on Catherine's face when she returned from Uganda, or her delight in dealing with feminist theologies of language. This is life; this is love; this is power.

Last year I taught a course on *Divine Love and Wisdom*. Two related passages we spent a lot of time on were

"Divinity fills all space in the universe non-spatially. (DLW 69)

"Divinity is in all time, non-temporally. (DLW 73)"

Swedenborg explains in depth that our thinking about the Lord should not be based on space and time (DLW 70), but rather on states of life, states of love—concluding that this is the way angels think. My hope is that your theological education has helped you think in terms of life and love.

And although this may seem contradictory, or paradoxical, I think it is perfect advice for new pastors. For ordination and the life of the pastor require living non-spatially and non-temporally in ways that one may not be used to. It means that it is your job—and what a privilege it is—to help people relate to the divine. The pastor is for many people their link with this other world and with what calls into question space and time.

It is a unique occupation in this regard: your fundamental commitment is not to some one thing, or job, or boss, or institution, or even the congregation (although that helps)—it is to the divine, it is to life and to love, which is not in space and time, which cannot be known the way other things, such as a tree, or a house, or a school, or a bylaw, or an exam, can be known. Life and love, the Lord, have a different rhythm—and they must be known in a different way. My hope is that your

continues on page 126

Religious Pluralism and the New Church

by George Dole

Rev. Dr. Dole presented this paper as a minicourse at the 2008 Annual Meeting held in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

When thoughts turn to the subject of religious pluralism, the image that probably comes first to mind is of trying to bring distinct religions or religious bodies into some kind of constructive relationship. This bears a haunting resemblance to physicist David Bohm's description of seeing our world as characterized by "a set of recurrent and relatively stable elements that are *outside* of each other."¹ He continues, "The task of science is then to start from such parts and to derive all wholes through abstraction, explaining them as the results of interactions of the parts."

Bohm then proceeds to make a counter proposal:

On the contrary, when one works in terms of the implicate order, one begins with the undivided wholeness of the universe, and the task of science is to derive the parts through abstraction from the whole, explaining them as approximately separable, stable, and recurrent, but externally related elements making up relatively autonomous sub-totalities. . . .

We'll look at that marvelously dense description more closely later, but for the moment I want only to suggest that in looking for the grounds of religious pluralism, we take very seriously Swedenborg's statements that there is a single whole, a "church universal," (*Heaven and Hell* 308) and derive our different religions from that whole.

This does not deny the murderous fanaticism of 9/11. It simply takes 9/12 with equal and even greater serious-

ness—that spontaneous flood of compassion for the victims and revulsion at the slaughter of the defenseless. 9/11 may have been a tragedy for the United States, but in and of itself it was a disaster for al-Qaida. By calling out the best, it revealed itself as the worst, and as vastly outnumbered. Since then, we have seen other evidences of oneness—



outpourings of aid for the victims of the tsunami, the Myanmar typhoon, and the earthquake in China; and in the case of the Myanmar typhoon, again a worldwide revulsion, this time against the manifest inhumanity of a tiny minority, the government of that unfortunate land.

"We are looking at something real and potent, and high voltage matters should be treated with care."

These are surely signs of a significant and powerful unanimity. It is not just a utopian vision, something preachers try to sell their congregations, pie-in-the-sky idealism. It has proved itself strong enough to move immense masses of material and sums of money. Nor

does it wear rose-colored glasses—the revulsion is as authentic as the compassion. This is a unanimity with a strong ethical "spine."

If that is the case, then the task before us is not so much to examine belief systems to find some least common denominator as it is to take a second look at human behavior. We are called to be not so much theorists as empiricists, to look at the evidence before us, recognizing that we will see that evidence through different lenses and that this, rather than offering us a license for ignoring what we do not want to see, entails a responsibility to look with the greatest honesty of which we are capable. We are looking at something real and potent, and high voltage matters should be treated with care.

The Anglican divine William Law went to the heart of the matter:

Selfishness and partiality are very inhuman and base qualities even in the things of this world; but in the doctrines of religion they are of a baser nature. Now, this is the greatest evil that the division of the church has brought forth; it raises in every communion a selfish, partial orthodoxy, which consists in courageously defending all that it has, and condemning all that it has not. And thus every champion is trained up in defense of their own truth, their own learning and their own church, and he has the most merit, the most honour, who likes everything, defends everything, among themselves, and leaves nothing uncensored in those that are of a different communion. . . .

Ask why even the best amongst the Catholics are very shy of owning the validity of the orders of our Church; it is because they are afraid of removing any odium from the Ref-

¹ David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 178.

Religious Pluralism

continued from page 119

ormation. Ask why no Protestants anywhere touch upon the benefit or necessity of celibacy of those who are separated from worldly business to preach the gospel; it is because that would be seeming to lessen the Roman error of not suffering marriage in her clergy. Ask why even the most worthy and pious among the clergy of the Established Church are afraid to assert the sufficiency of the Divine Light, the necessity of seeking only the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit; it is because the Quakers, who have broke off from the church, have made this doctrine their corner-stone. If we loved truth as such, if we sought it for its own sake, if we loved our neighbour as ourselves, if we desired nothing by our religion but to be acceptable to God, if we equally desired the salvation of all men, if we were afraid of error only because of its harmful nature to us and our fellow-creatures, then nothing of this spirit could have any place in us.

There is therefore a catholic spirit, a communion of saints in the love of God and all goodness, which no one can learn from that which is called orthodoxy in particular churches, but is only to be had by a total dying to all worldly views, by a pure love of God, and by such an unction from above as delivers the mind from all selfishness and makes it love truth and goodness with an equality of affection in every man, whether he is a Christian, a Jew or Gentile.²

It may take disasters on the order of 9/11 to awaken it, but I believe the evidence shows that Law is right and that there really *is* such a "catholic spirit," such a "communion of saints in the love of God and all goodness." It is not just an ideal, a dream. It is real, it is

powerful, and it is beautiful; and when we catch glimpses of it, it is hard to understand why we seem so often to be hopelessly fragmented.

With this in mind, let's look more closely at this "oneness." Swedenborg said it about as concisely as it can be said: "A form is more perfect as its constituents are distinguishably different and yet united" (*Divine Providence* 4.4); and the self-styled "biology watcher" Lewis Thomas brought this principle down to empirical, personal earth:

The human brain is the most public organ on the face of the earth, open to everything, sending out messages to everything. To be sure, it is hidden away in bone and conducts internal affairs in secrecy, but virtually all the business is the result of thinking that has already occurred in other minds. We pass thoughts around, from mind to mind, so compulsively and with such speed that the brains of mankind often appear, functionally, to be undergoing fusion.³

This "fusion," I would propose, is close kin to Swedenborg's "united," Bohm's "oneness," and Law's "communion of saints." The explicate order sees the brain as "distinguishably different," encased in bone and operating in secrecy, but from the perspective of the implicate order, that is not the whole story.

Let us turn back to David Bohm, then, and try to see ourselves not as totally separate units "*outside* each other" but as "approximately separable, stable and recurrent, but externally related elements making up relatively autonomous sub-totalities," taking the elements of the description one at a time.

Mentally, we are only "approximately separable." Swedenborg insists on this. "There are people who believe that

their thoughts and affections do not really reach out around them but are inside them, because they see what they are thinking as inside themselves and not as remote from themselves. They are sadly mistaken, though . . ." (*Heaven and Hell* 203). As Lewis Thomas observed, ideas are constantly passing from mind to mind. As I cite Thomas, Swedenborg, Bohm, Law, and others, what in this piece is actually "mine"? Yet I am accountable for what I say. I am at least *approximately* "separable."

Too, we are approximately "stable and recurrent." We are not entirely consistent, but there is at least an "approximate" continuity to our individual lives, a sense in which each of us is the same individual who was born however many years ago that happens to be. We definitely have our ups and downs, but we do seem to keep happening.

Third, we are "externally related." We experience ourselves, that is, as having boundaries and as needing boundaries, because when our boundaries are transgressed, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, it hurts. All the good intentions and clear thoughts in the world will not unite us into a single heaven unless we recognize and even welcome the fact that every "right" we have entails a corresponding responsibility and that every right-responsibility complex has its limits.

So we wind up realizing that we are indeed "relatively autonomous," autonomous enough to make decisions and be held accountable for them, but by no means so autonomous that we can totally transcend our environment and do whatever we please. That is, while our circumstances do not determine the choices we make, they do limit our options.

Lastly, while we may be *sub*-totalities, we are nevertheless "totalities" of a sort. We have not only continuity but also coherence. One of the late Rev. Cal

2 Cited from Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper Colophon 1970), pp. 196ff.

3 Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), pp. 166f.

What It Means

continued from page 113

these readers refuse to join a church. The Swedenborg Foundation, which publishes Swedenborg's writings, makes as many sales to people outside the Swedenborgian Church membership as it does to people within. Some of these Swedenborgians see the church's mission as getting the books of Swedenborg into as many hands as they can.

Finally, there are those committed to Swedenborgian principals wherever they find them, whether in Swedenborg's writings or in other faith traditions. These people are interested in truth in general, and seek it out in a variety of sources. Some look into Eastern traditions or ancient systems of theology, such as alchemy or Kabala, or perhaps New Age thought.

All three of these ways of being Swedenborgian are appropriate. Each way offers something meaningful, according to the personality and needs of the individual. But the matter becomes a little less clear when one considers the New Church that Swedenborg talks about.

Swedenborg claims that a new era began in 1757, and that the theology he was inspired to write contained core truths of this new era. This new era is symbolized in Revelations 12 by the woman clothed with the sun, and the son that she delivered is its doctrines. The dragon that attacks her and her child signifies the difficulty in acceptance of the new era and its doctrines. We hear different ideas about the relation of Swedenborgian organizations to this new era. Some say that we are it—in fact, that is what I was taught when I grew up in the church. Others say we are not it. My response is that we can be part of it, but that it is also happening all around us in the spiri-

tual currents flowing throughout this world.

We, as individuals and as an organized church, need to remain open to what is going on around us. We need to let go of Swedenborg himself to a certain degree. We need to let go of some of his language and also some of his religious categories. In my mind, to be participants in the new era that is

dawning, we need to be committed to truth wherever we find it.

Let me offer a few examples of what I mean by

letting go of Swedenborg himself. Among ourselves, word pairings like will and understanding, or charity and faith are large theological terms that signify a whole complex of meaning. Psychologists talk about affective and cognitive aspects of the human mind, which are essentially the same ideas.

In the book *The Course in Miracles* there is a sophisticated doctrine about evil. That work does not consider evil real. Evil only has power when we give it reality in our own consciousness. The book does not deny that we can allow evil to have power by assenting to it, but it only has power if we give it power. This is essentially what Swedenborg says. He states quite clearly that evil has no being. Only good is real. Evil and falsity are perversions of good and truth. It's all fantasy—a term we find throughout Swedenborg to talk about hell.

Finally, those who have read best selling author Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth* tell me that many of his ideas sound like Swedenborg. I think that

we can draw on Tolle in our mission to bring to earth the New Church. If a popular contemporary source is saying the same thing as Swedenborg, why not use his or her language? It is the truth in Swedenborg that matters to me, not his actual books. If we try to understand other doctrinal systems and don't approach them with suspicion and in an adversarial fashion, we may find that we are closer to the world around us than we had thought.

But, I don't mean to say that we don't need the Swedenborgian Church as an organization. There are doctrines that we can only find in Emanuel Swedenborg's writings. And there are many ideas in Swedenborg's writings that have shaped my life that I can't find elsewhere.

When I was thinking about pursuing ordination several years ago, I shopped around. I considered Lutheran, Unitarian, and Methodist churches. I had attended both Congregational Churches and Lutheran Churches on special occasions like Christmas Eve. I found these services meaningful. My own belief system wasn't offended, and I sort

of translated some of their theological language into my own understanding of theology. However, as an ordained minister, I needed to pay much closer attention to the churches I was considering. I wouldn't have felt right being a minister to a church I couldn't accept in my heart. I came back to the Swedenborgian Church because I agree with the fundamental principals that Swedenborg teaches. And the fact is, we can't find these teachings in other churches. This is the only church I feel comfortable representing as an ordained minister.

continues on page 125

"I think people would like most of what we stand for if we spoke to them in language they could recognize and accept."



Religious Pluralism

continued from page 120

Turley's fundamental principles in his counseling practice was that in order to help a client move beyond some particular dysfunction he had to discover what benefit that dysfunction brought with it. Somehow it met a need, fit into the client's whole system; and if it were simply excised, something at least equally dysfunctional would probably take its place.

When it comes to defining the oneness that pulls us together in response to disasters, I would suggest that we need one particular boundary, namely the boundary around "the church universal." Here Swedenborg, characteristically, gives us an enormous head start. "In the Lord's sight," he writes, "the universal church is like a single person, just as heaven is" (*Heaven and Hell* 308). Let us then give the universal church the most appropriate name of *Homo Religiosus*, and see what we can do by way of clearer definition. Empirically, what do we mean by the English equivalent of *homo*, namely "human"?

My *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the noun "human" biologically: "a bipedal primate mammal (*homo sapiens*)" or "any living or extinct member of the family (Hominidae) to which the primate belongs." When it comes to the adjective, it begins by defining it simply in terms of the noun. "1: of, relating to, or characteristic of humans 2: consisting of humans 3a: having human form or attributes." It continues, though, with "3b: susceptible to or representative of the sympathies and frailties of human nature."

Evidently, we see ourselves as characteristically sympathetic and frail. The first item finds strong support in the primary definition of the adjective "inhuman"—"lacking pity, kindness, or mercy." To be human is to be frail, sensitive, kind, and merciful. I cannot

speak with complete confidence about other languages than English, but various dictionaries tell me that German *menschlich* means both "human" and "humane," as do Swedish *mänsklig* and French *humain*, and that the Russian words for "human" and "humane" are about as closely akin as "human" and "humane" themselves.

This is empirical information. These definitions of "human" are not the recommendations of theologians or ethicists. Dictionaries do not give words their meanings; they report *usage*. They are like opinion polls, reporting what we think. The consensus of speakers of English is that to be human is to be both sympathetic and frail, that to lack pity, kindness, and mercy is to be inhuman.

I would suggest that frailty, compassion, kindness, and mercy are precisely the characteristics that unite us, or as our theology tells us, "Disagreement in doctrine does not prevent a church from being united if only there is a unanimity about willing well and acting well" (*Secrets of Heaven* 3451.2).

This unanimity both exists and works. Listen to one of the 210 (out of 3000) volunteers who went with the hospital ship *Mercy* to the aid of the victims of the tsunami in 2005 and stayed on to bring medical services to others in desperate need. He wrote,

We can do much to reverse the hostility against America simply by

Cruise the Alaska Coast and Glacier Bay

Cabins are still available for the post-convention Norwegian Cruise Lines Alaska/Glacier Bay Cruise round trip from Seattle, June 28–July 6, 2009.

For prices, payment schedule, and reservations, email Nancy Apple (ncapple@yahoo.com). Please indicate "Alaska Cruise '09" in the subject field.

For details about the cruise, ship, and cabins, go to <http://www.ncl.com> and look up the ship, Norwegian Pearl.

A refundable deposit of \$100 per person will hold a cabin for you. Send a check payable to Puget Sound Swedenborgian Church, c/o Nancy Apple, 5607-D 204th St. SW, Lynnwood, WA 98036

Please include names of all passengers and contact information—phone numbers & email. Indicate the type of cabin preferred—inside, outside, or balcony. All Aboard!

performing such humanitarian acts. According to a BBC poll, almost 70% of the people in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim nation, viewed our country with hostility before the tsunami. Today, according to a poll released by the Heritage Foundation, almost 70% think more favorably of us.⁴

We have a far more solid security when the enemy becomes a friend; and while this seems unlikely or even impossible in the midst of conflict, that is simply the effect of vision clouded by fear and anger. Look at some more facts. I was in grade school during most of World War II. If you had told me then that Germany and Japan, who had done things that dwarfed the sins of Saddam Hussein, would eventually be two of our closest allies, I would have thought you were out of your mind. What force was powerful enough to effect these changes?

This is not to ignore the dark side. The word "inhuman" is in the dictionary because it is needed. Events like the holocaust and 9/11 happen, and they involve the carefully considered, deliberate acts of human beings.

In this connection I would turn to the remarkable longshoreman-cum-philosopher Eric Hoffer, who looked hard and clearly at the phenomenon of

4 Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld, "A New Way to Treat the World", in *Parade Sunday Magazine* of the Portland, Maine *Sunday Telegram*, June 12, 2005, p. 6.

fanaticism. He wrote,

Mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a God, but never without belief in a devil. Usually the strength of a mass movement is proportionate to the vividness and tangibility of its devil. When Hitler was asked whether he thought the Jew must be destroyed, he answered, "No . . . we should then have to invent him. It is essential to have a tangible enemy, not merely an abstract one."⁵

To me, the ugliness of the Holocaust is different only in scale from the ugliness of any "selfish, partial orthodoxy" that lives by "courageously defending all that it has, and condemning all that it has not"—in our own case, demonizing "the Old Church."

So much for *homo*, then. What about *religiosus*? The root meaning of the word involves "binding," and I would suggest that the recurrent subtext of the word "religious," a meaning that runs just below the surface, is one of being bound or committed to something or someone beyond oneself. It involves a belief that there is a way things really, really are, and that there is nothing we can do about that basic fact. The opposite of religion is the belief reality is whatever we say it is.

This struck me with full force in 1992 when a Russian physicist named Mikhail Kazachkov gave a paper entitled "Whatever Happened to the Evil Empire," and began as follows:

In 1967 I was just beginning my career in theoretical physics. For four months I just sat at my desk, not using a computer, not talking to anyone—just drafting some formulas in my head. Eventually, I published

an article. The curve calculated in my article coincided with another one, measured by a person sitting on the other side of the globe, in Seattle, at Boeing Scientific Research Laboratories.

There is nothing unusual about this. One physicist did the calculations, the other one measured, and the results coincided. Which means both did good jobs, nothing more. Well, it struck me. I was really perplexed by the fact that these two curves coincided. It suddenly dawned on me that what exists in the real world outside is in harmony and accordance with the way my brain functions. Why?

That was a difficult question and my first exposure to the idea of God.⁶

That was *my* first exposure to real atheism, atheism not as the conscious denial of the existence of God but atheism as the absence of any idea of God at all, of any ultimate reality. If we publish it, it is *Pravda*—truth. In Eric Hoffer's words,

All active mass movements strive . . . to interpose a fact-proof screen between the faithful and the realities of the world. They do this by claiming that the ultimate and absolute truth is already embodied in their doctrine and that there is no truth nor certitude outside it.⁷

In stark contrast, *Homo Religiosus* is an empiricist with a profound respect for reality, a respect that at its heart is reverence. This is an essential dimension of the sense of frailty that figures so centrally in the definition of the

word "human;" and its denial by "the true believer" is a sign not of strength but of radical insecurity.

I would hope then for a recognition that a real and powerful unity already exists, however rarely it may show itself. Religious pluralism is not something we have to create *ex nihilo*. *Homo Religiosus* is there to be discovered; and while we may find ourselves quite attached to some of the "covers," they will be much easier to discard once we see what they are concealing.

We will find, I think, what William Blake is saying in one of the most familiar of his "Songs of Innocence," "The Divine Image."

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face;
And Love, the human form divine;
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine:
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

In more philosophical language, Blake is saying that mercy, pity, peace, and love are both down-to-earth real and transcendent. In theological terms, Blake is drawing an equation between "divine" and "human" that could short-circuit centuries of doctrinal debate—but that would take a maxicourse. ☸

Rev. Dr. George Dole is pastor of the Bath, Maine New Church.

5 Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 254. Cited in Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 86.

6 Mikhail P. Kazachkov, *Whatever Happened to the Evil Empire* (some personal notes and prison cell reflections), unpublished paper delivered at The Transnational Institute Conference on "The Renewal of Russian Spiritual Life" held at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, July 8-11, 1992.

7 Hoffer, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

Annual Meeting of the Women's Alliance

by Nancy Little

The 105th annual meeting of the National Alliance of New Church Women in North America was held on July 3, 2008 at Bridgewater State College at the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church.

The following members were elected to office for the 2008–2009 year:

- President: Nancy Little (Massachusetts)
- Vice president: Beth Harvie (Mid Atlantic)
- Secretary: Pat Sommer (Ohio)
- Treasurer: Jeannette Hille (Minnesota)
- Mite Box chair: Barb Boxwell (Michigan)
- Round robin chair: Polly Baxter (Ohio/Michigan)
- Publications chair: Rev. Jennifer Tafel (Michigan)
- Religious chair: Rev. Lana Sandahl (Pacific Coast)

Nominating committee:

- Nancy Freestone (2009, Pacific Coast)
- Denyse Daurat (2010, Massachusetts)
- Missy Sommer (2011, Ohio)
- Leah Goodwin, chair (2012, Massachusetts)
- Jeannette Hille (2013, Minnesota)

In a brief business meeting preceding the luncheon:



Rev. Jennifer Tafel, (center) pastor of the newly established Lansing, Michigan Swedenborgian Church accepting the Mite Box Award for 2008 with parishioner Julie Vigas (L) and Barb Boxwell (R), Alliance Mite Box Chair.

- Members of the Alliance voted to eliminate the office of 2nd vice president.
- Rev. Jennifer Tafel, pastor of the newly established Lansing, Michigan church, recipient of the 2008 Mite Box Award, was presented with a check for \$1,304.85.
- It was announced that the 2009 Mite Box will be awarded to the New Church of the Southwest Desert in New Mexico, where Rev. Dr. Sky Paradise is the pastor. Over \$800 was collected during convention towards the 2009 Mite Box.
- Polly Baxter, chair of the Round Robin Committee, reported that there were no "flights" this year.

Polly suggested that we take advantage of technology and use email in place of round robin letters. The Executive Committee will discuss this more in the coming year. Polly can be reached at polbax@baxtonia.com.

- Rev. Renee Machiniak reminded us that she still has plenty of Alliance pins featuring the Swedenborgian cross for sale. She suggested that they make nice gifts for new members. Rev. Renee can be contacted at revrene@aol.com.
- A new blog was established: wom-ensalliance.blogspot.com. If other officers or committee chairs would like to post to the blog, contact the president, Nancy Little at littlenancyf@yahoo.com

The 106th annual meeting of the Alliance will be held in 2009 in Seattle, Washington.

Donations to the Mite Box can be sent to:

Jeanette Hille, Treasurer
4240 Larch Place North
Plymouth, MN 55442 ☎

Nancy Little is president of the the National Alliance of Women.

Transformation

This is a poem that I wrote for my Women's Spiritual Quest class last semester. It marks the end of one journey and the beginning of another.

transformation
journey, gift
freeing, terrifying, fulfilling
coming into wholeness
transformation

—Catherine Lauber

Executive Editor Search

The Swedenborg Foundation seeks an executive editor. The executive editor is the chief operations officer who, under the direction of the board, supervises and coordinates a small professional staff in carrying out the programs of the Swedenborg Foundation.

The search will continue until the position is filled.

Interested parties should contact the chairperson of the search committee, James Lawrence, at jlawrence@psr.edu or 510-849-8232.

Heart, Head & Hands

continued from page 116

the elderly are particularly good candidates. It is an acceptable therapy because it is short-term, relatively low cost, and conforms to the categories of psychopathology found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV)*, published by the American Psychiatric Association, out of which insurance payments are calculated. Discrete thought and behaviors can also more easily be quantified. It is also useful in promoting patient compliance. From a scientific standpoint the goal of cognitive behaviorism is the manipulation, prediction, and control of behavior. The author, however, in places, speaks of the "higher mind of the child" and "the higher self within us." This is not cognitive behavioral therapy either. In fact, the author mentions Freud but has much more of an emphasis on Jung, as well as humanistic and transpersonal psychology, existentialism, and Eastern religions. Through inserts, he quotes liberally from the New Testament, and he ends every chapter with a quote from Swedenborg.

The chapter on "Valuing Sex" is one of the shortest in the book, just five pages. The narrative focuses on Swedenborg's definition of conjugal love—the understanding of truth, which is in the man, and the affection of good, which is in the woman. The two kinds join into a spiritual marriage, which descends from heaven. The author advocates only one partner, avoids a close reading of Swedenborg's own writings on the subject, emphasizes a few stereotypic behaviors common to men and women, and, talks about mainly his own beliefs. Specifically, he affirms that "Conjugal love is directed to and shared with one person of the other sex."

After this, however, he spends another chapter of five pages on how to make love last in a relationship. Here,

we feel as if we are getting some solid advice from a seasoned marriage counselor. By the middle of the book, however, he has abandoned all pretence of the cognitivists and becomes an outright exponent of Swedenborg's ideas in the monotheistic context of Christianity. Meanwhile, he continues to quote from some of the core technical scriptures in Buddhism, Jainism, Vedantic Hinduism and Chinese Taoism.

Discussing rationality and freedom, for instance, he draws on the idea found in *Divine Love and Wisdom* that heaven is created by God, while hell is created by man through the misuse of the capacities of rationality and freedom. At the same time, hearing voices, dreaming, and other altered states of consciousness, such as seeing visions associated with the world's religious traditions, also come in for discussion.

The extent to which he achieved his purpose—a statement on the evolution of spiritual consciousness, independent of psychology and denominational religion—emerges as the true message of the book. This is entirely compatible with Swedenborg's own spiritual journey. While his family were Lutherans, his father even being bishop of Skara, Swedenborg's own internal awakening came independent of the denominations. His vision of 1757 even confirmed in him that the future of Christianity lay in a transformation of world consciousness and a falling away of the denominations. Emerson confirmed this idea in *Representative Men* (1850), enshrining the idea that human beings could know God by looking within, independent of organized religion.

Here we come to the great debate between science and religion. Science believes that spirituality is merely a thought in the mind of a human animal enmeshed in the process of biological evolution. Swedenborg described exactly the opposite—the essential nature of the cosmos is that the natural

What It Means

continued from page 121

This church has a lot to offer the world. But I think we need to do it in language that the world will hear. And if this means using other terminology than Swedenborg's own, then we need to use it. In my sermons in Edmonton, I draw heavily on the Bible and I also quote Swedenborg. We have had visitors from other faiths come to the church, usually as guest musicians, and they have not found objection to my sermons. In fact, some have praised them. At the same time, members of the Swedenborgian Church haven't missed the emphasis on Swedenborgian doctrines they expect in this church. I think people would like most of what we stand for if we spoke to them in language they could recognize and accept. We are a Christian church and a biblical church. If we emphasize Jesus and the Bible, who will object? If we take the spirit and essential doctrines of Swedenborg and talk to others in language they are familiar with, our contribution to the world will be much greater. We will be less ingrown, and I believe we will grow.

I am committed to the spiritual health and prosperity of The Edmonton Church of the Holy City, to the Swedenborgian Church in the United States and Canada, to Swedenborg's principles, and to the new era dawning within our organization and all around us. I thank the Swedenborgian Church in North America and the Edmonton Church of the Holy City for giving me the chance to minister in an organization and parish to which I can give my whole commitment. ☿

Rev. Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Edmonton Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta.

is derived from the spiritual, not the other way around. *Science models real-*

continues on page 126

Graduation Address

continued from page 118

theological education has taught you that divinity, the greatest power in the world, is beyond our typical ways of conceiving things.

Perceiving this power has implications. It means that you are determined by a relationship that is unlike any other in the world, a relationship with at least three unique dimensions.

The first dimension, and the one which may have led you to seminary, involves giving up yourself and your place in the world, your schedules, agendas, loves, and timetables. It involves losing your lives as you know them.

The second dimension, and the one that you will encounter in lives of ministry, involves being attuned to what may seem insignificant, and yet has all the significance in the world: the pain in someone's life, listening to someone in distress, sharing a piece of bread with one who is hungry, rejoicing in a new birth, mourning at a death, or delighting in a wedding.

The third dimension, and the one that I pray stays with you throughout your life, involves allowing you to sense possibilities—possibilities for humans to open to visions of what could be or might be, what is yet to come.

To know the greatest power is to live as the lotus seed, whose center is empty, empty with the possibility of receiving life and love and growing, in the mud, to eventually bloom and blossom.

It is my hope that your theological education has taught you to continue, to continue pursuing life and love as the greatest power in the world, and to always think as the angels do, according to this life and love. ☩

Dr. Inese Radzins is the Dorthea Harvey Professor of Swedenborgian Studies at the Swedenborg House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

Heart, Head & Hands

continued from page 125

ity to help us to better understand and control it intellectually. Religion deals with problems of meaning and value to the person who is actually experiencing reality in the moment, and with the cultivation of intuitive insight. The author leads us from one domain to the other. The happy effect is that we find ourselves understanding a text while feeling that, at the same time, we are liberated by just reading it. This happens in many places in the narrative.

Traditionalists will love the book, as it preaches the straight and narrow with regard to doctrine, but in places it almost unconsciously breaks out into a kind of semi-restrained wildness that reminds us of Swedenborg's own mind—rational but also inward, intuitive, deep, creative, and, as our British cousins are wont to say, spot on. ☩

Eugene Taylor, PhD, is a lecturer at Harvard Medical School and vice president of the Massachusetts Association.

Paulhaven

continued from page 117

er teens wrote for their Easter skit, in which "Jesus rose, rose, rose, rose; I say he rose, rose, rose, rose." And as Jesus rose, rose, rose, rose so did the voices of the teens and their upturned palms. We were treated to a remix of this song during the closing of the session.

In our last session I asked my class what they had liked most about Paulhaven. One camper said, "Playing baseball." On Wednesday the whole camp walks up the hill to the ball field. The kitchen staff barbeques hot dogs and makes potato salad and macaroni salad. This year it was boys against girls, to make up for the terrible defeats the boys suffered in the sports of the day before. On this day, the boys prevailed—decisively. But it could have been any other activity—campfire, hug

Regional Associates Program for Free Book Distribution

The Swedenborg Foundation's Regional Associates Program was established for people who love and appreciate Swedenborg's writings and have a strong desire to share his teachings with others who are unfamiliar with them and who are receptive. Since the Swedenborg Foundation is strictly a non profit educational publisher, the intent of this program is to help people discover Swedenborg without a denomination or church body being associated with these efforts.

A candidate must submit an application, be an annual member of the Swedenborg Foundation and a resident of the US or Canada. Regional associates may not receive payment for any book they receive free of charge from the Foundation. For more information contact customerservice@swedenborg.com. ☩

night, crafts. It was really "the Paulhaven zone."

On the last day of camp a 10-year-old boy was talking with me. It was his first year at Paulhaven. He said, "This week was a blast! This is the best summer I've ever had!" A shy boy who only gave out handshakes when we hugged each other after campfire was hugging by the final campfire.

At Paulhaven this year 26 teens and 16 staff lived together for a week. Most of these people only knew each other for that one magical week of the year. Campers and staff alike pulled together to make Paulhaven the best experience we could. And it happened again! On my drive home, I started thinking fondly about the people and the experiences I had. I smiled and began making plans for Paulhaven 2009. I wanted to be back in "the Paulhaven zone."

Passages

Confirmations

At Paulhaven Camp 2008 in Alberta, Canada, **Leah Alexandra Francis**, **Brittany Lynn Steeves**, **Clinton Fredrick Francis**, **Gordon Douglas Schellenberg**, and **Darren Lorne Epp** were confirmed with joy into the Christian Church by Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete.

New Members

The New Church of the Southwest Desert in Silver City, New Mexico received the following members: **Beverly Drennan** and **Nancy Deeg** of El Paso, Texas; **Barbara Russell** of Bayard, New Mexico; **Catharine Gelbart** of Mimbres, New Mexico; **Malika Crozier**, **Jane Kuan**, **Jerri Jourdain**, **Sandy McKinney**, **Theresa Meehan**, **David Nelson**, **Carley Preusch**, **Josette Riggle**, **Jeffrey Scott**, **Sharon Scotti**, **Julie Schultz**, **Kate Stansberger**, and **Rick Stansberger**, of Silver City.

Deaths

Long-time member of the Urbana Society and ardent supporter of the

church and Urbana University **John W. Keller** passed away August 9, 2008. John gave generously over many years to the wellbeing and furtherance of the church. He served on the Urbana Church board and the Ohio Association executive committee, including several terms as president. As his health began to fail due to long-term effects of diabetes, he still had his family bring him to church from Columbus on occasion. He received an honorary doctorate from Urbana University where he served on the board for over 30 years, his last nine as chair. He had a wonderful spirit of giving and was a great example of our church's doctrine of "use." Those who knew him will miss this "gentle man" of intelligence and compassion, and "gentleman" in the best sense of the word. John is preceded in death by his daughter, Margaret "Peggy" Keller White, and survived by his wife of 46 years, Donna Altman Keller; sister, Alberta Keller Theriault; children, Siebahn Gallagher, Kristin Keller, Marti Keller Baggs, and John W. Keller; six grandchildren; and numerous great-grandchildren.

Juliet Hadden, long time member the Cincinnati New Church of Montgomery, entered the spiritual world August 8, 2008. A graveside memorial service was held September 6, 2008, Rev. John Billings officiating.

Juliet was both religious and spiritual; she loved to talk about spiritual matters. She wanted the fundamental sense of her service to be one of celebration, even though she also knew there was a time and place for sadness. She was deeply aware of the wonder and complexity and infinite wisdom of the way God has created his universe, the natural and the spiritual world. She loved religious observances and she also loved the Bible. She did not like to see things happen that were even partially tainted with twisted motives and methods, and would fight hard and vociferously

Philadelphia Library Fund Grants

The Philadelphia Library Fund application deadline for 2009 is October 31, 2008. The Philadelphia Library Fund, administered by FPRSU, makes funds available to purchase books for libraries and for free distribution of "material written by, relating to or having a marked interest in the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg."

For more information or to submit a request, contact manager@swedenborg.org.

to stand, alone if necessary, behind her perceptions and convictions of what was both right and just.

Her loving nature was best revealed in two ways. The first was her joy in being a mother of infants. The second was her deeper, loving, more romantic self, which was expressed in a poem she wrote for the wedding chapel. It has been chosen by many couples for their weddings. It is called, simply "Promise."

I bring you all I have been,
and am,
and will be.
And most important,
what will be between us
when we are one.

I ask the same of you,
that between us
we can meet anger with acceptance
and understanding;
pain with compassion;
tenderness with appreciation;
and joy with joy.

I want our love to bring us
closer and closer,
so our coming together
will create something bigger
than ourselves.
So our union becomes
a light in the eye of God.

FNCA Report

continued from page 115

way to spell that?); some delightful crafts (paper beads & crocheted owls, anyone?); our second Humor Night (singing: "... and a minister in a sling"); our regular weekly Banana Hunt (that ends with banana splits); and our absolutely hilarious, do-not-miss-it, annual Sales Table Auction (that netted over \$800!). Special thanks to all the volunteers who lead these wonderful events and helped make this year's FNCA session a total hit for everyone. ☸

Trevor has been attending the Fryeburg New Church Assembly since birth. He serves on its Board of Directors and he is the activities coordinator and waterfront director during the summer session.

About the Swedenborgian Church

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.

American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian churches. As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church 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 said, "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.

SWEDENBORGIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES

New Online Course!

Would you like to learn how to live with more acceptance of yourself and of your life journey, to discuss with others the real purpose of your life and of creation itself? to deepen your understanding of Swedenborg's thought and how it applies to your life?

Then come and learn with us!

What in the World is God Doing?!

Understanding Swedenborg's Divine Providence

October 13 – December 1, 2008

Teaching Minister: Rev. Lee Woofenden

Why does God allow so much pain and suffering in the world? Why do greedy and unscrupulous people so often enjoy life at the top? And where is God when we are struggling through life in a world that is not very friendly to spiritual values? All of us have asked ourselves these types of questions as we see the evil, suffering, and pain that are all mixed in with the incredible beauty of this world.

These "tough questions" are exactly the ones Emanuel Swedenborg tackles in one of his most popular books, *Divine Providence*. During this seven-week online class we will delve into issues of good and evil, freedom and responsibility, the eternal vs. the temporary, and God's goals for human beings and human society. Each week the teacher will offer a written presentation based on assigned readings from *Divine Providence*. Then we will discuss your questions about what God is doing in this world and in your life.

Course fee: \$125. Financial assistance is available.

To register or for more information email khinrichs@shs.psr.edu.

Stay tuned for more upcoming courses:

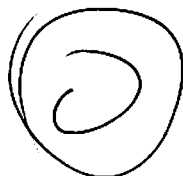
In January: "The Six Days of Creation: A Swedenborgian View of Genesis 1" with Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

In April: "True Christian Religion" with Rev. Dr. Inese Radzins and "Fostering a Personal Connection with God" with Rev. Dr. David Fekete

In July: "Living Spiritually" with Rev. Kim Hinrichs

The Swedenborgian Church of North America
The Messenger
11 Highland Avenue
Newtonville, MA 02460

Address Service Requested



*****AUTO**3-DIGIT 024

CENTRAL OFFICE

27

11 Highland Ave

Newtonville MA 02460-1852

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Plymouth, IN
Permit No. 105