

THE MESSENGER

Official Organ of the Swedenborgian Church

DECEMBER 1970



M. Kirvan

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

At Christmas time this year, *The Messenger* brings you a carefully and thoroughly structured view of our Christmas experience, by the Rev. Thornton O. Smallwood, Lay Minister of the Chicago Church; a glowing little gem of insight into the meaning of Christmas, by Alberta (Mrs. Frank) Theriault, President of the Cleveland Church; and a graphic expression of the feeling of warmth and light in the cold and dark—the heart of our best experiences of Christmas, by Margaret Kirven, Boston University student and my daughter.

What shall I add from myself, before committing these sixteen pages of type and pictures to the reproductive processes that increase their *quantity* but freeze forever the *quality* of my choices, editing, arrangement, and writing? As my question implies, I finish my work on this issue—like most issues, to tell the truth—with a gnawing but ill-defined sense of disappointment. Again as usual, I am somewhere between satisfied and really pleased with what is in the pages, but rather sad and anxious about what is not. *The Messenger* is so much more in my hopes and dreams for publishing and for the church than it usually is in print, that I grieve a little almost every month on my way to the printers.

I feel this especially now, when the Christmas season and message awakens so many feelings and ideas that I personally want to share with all of you I know and love, and all of you who know me through these pages; and when I dream of making *The Messenger* a more active force (along with the church's traditions and teachings, fellowship and ministry) in the church's function of transmitting the blessings of Christmas. These thoughts sadden me. Perhaps that's as it should be, however. Christmas at its best is joyous, but not (*pace*, Greeting Card Industry) "Merry." Joy is deeper than merriment, and whatever rejoicing touches deeply enough into the ambiguities of our spirit-flesh existence necessarily has an edge of sadness.

In the joy of Christmas, I remember—without having to apologize for the time and ways that I have disappointed myself or you—that the blessings of this season do not depend on me, or on these pages, any more than the blessings and "life support system" of the church depends on me. I can't publish anything that will bring the Lord more vividly and actively into your life, nor anything that can keep him out, either. My limits and failures become easier to live with, *just because* the Lord has been born among us and come again. That is good news of great joy to me, and to you, and to all people.

Robert H. Kirven

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CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

by

The Rev. Thornton O. Smallwood

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. (Luke 2:9)

"Christ, the Light of the World," is no mere saying. It is a truth so profound that the opening verses of John's gospel set forth this truth for all to perceive and acknowledge.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1:48)

So it is that throughout the years and centuries since the Lord's birth, light—and the many applications of it—have been and remain closely associated with Christmas. They range, these associations, from the Christmas tree to the single lighted candle; and there could indeed be no more profound single way to remind ourselves of the Lord's birth, than through one of the many sources of light—that illumine both the mind and body of mankind.

Two Kinds of Light

While the light that floods the body is itself visible, and therefore reveals to the eyes of the body the realm of natural objects about it; the light of the mind is an invisible light which the body can not see or detect, but one which the soul, or spirit, can. It lights upon, or enlightens, the mind and path of the human spirit, and then humanity can walk unerringly in the often hidden and obscure paths of righteousness "for His name's sake." Thus, without the light cast upon life by the light of the life of the Lord Himself, mankind would never have regained the pathway of life, and could therefore never experience salvation.

That mankind might therefore see and acknowledge the birth of light into the world, with which to enlighten and thus transform the mind of all mankind, it pleased the Lord to closely and beautifully

associate light with His birth, in the minds of all humanity. Thus, it was at night when the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds with the glad tidings; and in hearing the angelic message and seeing the great light that accompanied the revelation, they immediately acted upon what it revealed to them. It was also at night that the Star of Bethlehem was seen by the Wise Men in the East. Like the shepherds, they were led by what they saw at night, shining in the darkness, to the shrine of the Lord Himself. Thus, because the darkness was so complete, both in the outer world of nature and in the inner worlds of the human spirit, the revelation of Light Itself became the radiant symbol of Christmas throughout all the ages since.

As all humanity is fashioned by the Lord to receive heavenly directions from him as to how to best ultimately reach him in the life to come, so the heavenly light, seen as a manifestation of the Lord's birth, was seen by human spirits of both the shepherds and the wise men, but in different ways. The wise men saw it as a brilliant white star that moved and beckoned to them overhead until it came and stood over where the young child was. The shepherds saw the Light as the glory of the Lord, shining about the revealing angel, and their action and reaction to what they heard and saw was to carry them immediately into the presence of the Lord Himself.

The Way of Wisdom and Understanding

In the case of the Wise Men, their minds were illumined by heaven at the time the star appeared, and they then began to plod their weary way to Jerusalem, where Herod's henchmen rehearsed in their ears where the Lord was to be born. The shepherds, however, were given the same information—and much more—by spoken revelation at the same time that their minds were enlightened, so that their reaction could almost bring them instantaneously into the Lord's presence. Thus, both the Wise Men and the simple, good men—by means of light—could find the Lord. Both did find him: for in seeing the light of the Lord, and in using it to find him at the Christmas time of the human soul, humanity will always find him—regardless of whether we are drawn to him out of our love for him, or our understanding of him. No one, therefore, ever has an excuse for *not* finding the Lord *somehow*, in the Christmas time of the human spirit.

We all of us know, I am sure, either from personal experience or through the lives of others we may know, how long and arduous the journey of the wise man *can* be, if moved merely—or primarily—by truth, to find something living of the Lord. The way is long and indirect. It can not go directly to the Lord through inner personal direct revelation, as can those both enlightened *and* warmed by the living personality of the revealing angel. They must do all their travelling at night over great distances, and even *then* the star does not lead them *directly* to the Lord, but first to the church that has his Word (his established permanent light for the human spirit). There, in the church, the truth of where the Lord *is* to be actually born can be learned; and *then* it is that the human intellect can be so enlightened by the invisible inner light of the human spirit, that the men can *at long last* come into his presence with external gifts symbolic of the inner lives of worship and devotion they bring to him. Yes, the Lord can *always* eventually be found at Christmas through the cold white light of the literal sense of Scripture, until inner direction is awakened sufficiently to cover the short distance that then remains between where one is spiritually and where the Lord himself then is.

The Way of Love

The shepherds, on the other hand, had been doing what they could with their inner lives—even during the long night of superstition, of ignorance and falsity, that so fully engulfed their spirits. They were in the same country as Bethlehem, showing that they were spiritually attuned to receive enlightenment concerning the birth of the Lord. As shepherds, we know that they were guiding and watching over all their flocks, their living affections closest to the Lord as the character: “keeping watch over their flocks by night,” to see that none of these affections would be harmed or lost sight of during the *long*—the all but eternal—night. They were protecting from harm soft, living forms of inner life—life exceedingly close to the Lord—and because they *were* protecting with their own lives that which was close to the Lord Himself, the angel of the Lord could come directly to them and give them immediate revelation. They didn’t *need* to go to Jerusalem first, and hear or read for themselves from Scripture where Christ should be born. Instead, inner revelation (from the voice and presence of the angel of the Lord) told them all they needed to know, and then gave them the needed

spiritual impetus to *actually start out* and come in to the presence of the Lord Himself. It is not enough to *know* that the Lord will be born in the Bethlehem of our spirits. We must then *act* on the information, and *go* to him, either by the starlight of the human spirit—if we be wise men—or by the invisible light of the emotion of love if we be those of loving hearts.

Wise Men of Today

It is sometimes hard for the wise today to react emotionally to the birth of the Lord at Christmas, even as it doubtless was for the wise men. They have a long way to go to reach the Christmas spirit. There are presents to obtain that will reflect what they themselves are, which they then try to match up with those whom they will honor with gifts. Many miles are travelled in Christmas shopping and then seeing that somehow or other, in all the vast Christmas rush, the presents finally (and hopefully) get to their intended recipients on time. With so much to do, they may *never* get *fully* involved emotionally in the Christmas season, but remain more or less content to follow the star of truth and tradition, bring gifts because it is the season of giving, and then give a more external form of homage at the shrine of the Lord’s nativity. It is the very best they can do, and they have their place in the Lord’s kingdom of the redeemed.

Modern Shepherds

Then there are the shepherds who can be reached directly by the human voice and personality of *living human inner revelation and perception*. Unlike the wise men, there is instant inner emotional reaction. They respond. What happened to them that was different from the merely wise men? And what was their different response?

“The angel of the Lord came upon them.” An angel signifies divine truth. It also signifies, in a supreme sense, the Lord. “The angel of the Lord came upon them,” therefore, shows that through protecting with their very lives those inner thoughts and affections which were most innocent and closest to the Lord—incorporated into a living revelation of him in the form of the angel of the Lord—and then made manifest to them. They didn’t *need* to know the intimate details of the heavenly revelation of where the Lord should be born, as Scripture reveals it. Divine revelation could come to them more directly, more intimately, more movingly

through the revealing light and heat of love and emotion, than it could ever come through truth alone.

What is, or can be, the immediate response to a new situation or revelation, even concerning the Lord? It can be, and often is, one of fear. The shepherds, we are told, immediately were "sore afraid." A new dimension had been added to life for them. The living presence of revealing truth was entirely foreign to them. The sense of fear that came upon them showed that their simple faith was not enough to sustain them in times of more perfect revelation. Fear, Swedenborg tells us, has relation to evil and is mentioned for the spiritual man, or one capable of becoming spiritual. All those who tenderly keep watch over their flocks of living affections as best they can, during the course of the long night of this world, can be and are overwhelmed with fear that they are not doing enough when living revelation comes to them. They fear for their own personal safety, both from without and from within. People who constantly *try* to do what is good, protect the living affections within them from harm, are frequently in fear that they are not doing enough. They fear failure in the light of revealed divine truth. It is not the revealed truth that comes to those who are trying to lead the good life that inspires fear. Rather it is the hells themselves that attack those who *are* trying to lead the good life that fill them with fear, that make them "sore afraid." What *more* should they be doing with their lives to find something *more* of the new born Christ in their lives to go towards during the Christmas season?

Those who can be reached by the Lord through their affection of finding him, are the shepherds in this life. They have carefully watched over all the innocent affections in their lives so that they may be constantly protected from being destroyed or scattered by evil thoughts and affections which have nothing in common with the Lord. Everything in their lives may be in the comparative darkness of the blackest night; yet, because even in spite of all the darkness they do what they can to best protect and defend all that is innocent within their lives. What little they may know of divine revelation will be enough. It will not be the book learning of the wise men, but the more exalted and intimate means of revealing the birth of the Lord in their midst, to which they can then *bring* their *entire* lives. They will not bring expensive, or impressive, external tokens of love and affection to

the Lord. They will bring themselves, *all* of themselves, as a living present and tribute to Christ, the Light of the World.

The Glory of the Lord

The writings of the church tell us that "glory signifies divine truth as it is in heaven, because divine truth is the light of heaven, and from that light all the splendor and magnificence and glory is derived there." "The glory of the Lord that shone round about them," shows, therefore, that the truth they knew about the Lord, through protecting all their innocent affections from harm in life, were all collected together by the Lord, brought together into human form, bathed in the light of heaven, and then revealed to them.

The very first thing which these newly revealed truths in perfect human form reveal to all the shepherds in the world is this: "Fear not." The shepherds will never have the wisdom of the wise men, but they don't really need it. The way to perfection through wisdom is always longer, more indirect, tedious and time consuming, than by means of love. The merely wise man, by his very nature, must of necessity rationalize his way to religion and the heart of it—the Lord Himself—while the more emotional shepherds see the same light of revelation in another form, the glory of the Lord in the form of the revealing angel. Not only does this light in the form of a living angel warm them with affection and emotion that they must expend by going directly to the Lord at once with their entire lives, but the revealing light of truth then gives them in words of celestial fire absolute directions for finding the infant Lord. Listen carefully to what the angel of the Lord, as revealed truth from Christ, the Light of the World, brings to them.

The Glorious Message:

Fear Not—the Christ is Born

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all* people. For *unto you* is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Nowhere in the Word were all these details given concerning the birth of the Lord prior to His birth, so the revelation given to the shepherds was *not* a re-awakening of what they already *knew* from Scripture. Instead, the revelation now given to them was additional,

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needed, information—based on the protection they had previously given to the truths which they did know from the Lord's Word, the flocks they had constantly protected from the dangers of falsity and evil so rampant in the world at the time of the Lord's coming, and in our own day also. Then, based on the inner revelation of new inner truth which they perceived for the first time—and which was augmented by their intense longing and desire to immediately find the Lord with their entire lives—they indeed went with haste, and found the new-born Lord as the living center of all true Christian religion, waiting lovingly to receive them into his presence.

The Night Before Christmas

This Christmas, in the time of the birth of the Lord's second coming, another vast night has settled over the world and gripped all Christendom. The wise men, so called, are peering out into the night skies—much of which darkness they have created themselves—trying to see a sign, or perhaps even in fear that they *will* see some sign of revelation that may serve to later discredit them. In any event, while they examine the heavens with telescopes and the most sophisticated natural instruments ever known, and still doubt whether or not God exists, the simple shepherds of society are not bothered or hampered by the sheer vastness of knowledge that is available. Christ, for them, is not lost or covered up by all the material knowledge of the world today. Instead of being in love with external knowledge that *may*, or *may not*, eventually lead to Bethlehem, they do not try to find their way to the Lord by starlight.

Instead they take *what they can*, both from Scripture and the revealed writings of their church, bring it alive within their own personal lives and characters until they become surrounded externally and internally by the high innocence, peace, and protection of the flocks they tend. They do not "climb the heavenly steps to bring the Lord Christ down," as one of our hymns states so graphically. They do not envy the great intellects which may—or may not—find the Lord at Christmas. Instead they find all that they can ever find of Christ, the Light of the World, as a living reality within the truths they know and love. Christ, the Lord, is continually a living reality within them. And when this is the case, then truly, one great day in their lives, the simple truths they know, love, cherish and constantly protect from all harm will be

brought together, by the mercy of the Lord, into a human form, that of the angel of the Lord, to reveal to them personally when and where Christ, the Lord, is born *for them*. This is the Christmas message for the shepherds in the world: Be not afraid because of what you *don't* have, in the way of formal education or religious insight. Rather rejoice and be exceeding glad for what you have kept alive within you that is closest to the Lord, by means of which he Himself can be born anew to you this Christmas.

As innocent shepherds, let us therefore "say one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us" through the church we love.

MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is beauty—the beauty of truth that is the form of love. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. . . ." The source of all beauty was born among us in an ugly and desolate time and place, and His life was more beautiful than the conceptions of the greatest artists. Truth and order, goodness and love, those qualities that vivify all art, were manifested fully in His life on earth. There was never anything disorganized, fussy or superfluous in anything He said or did.

As we celebrate Christmas, we see that man intuitively recognizes this incarnation of beauty. In the gray cold days of winter we strive to express it in color and light and music. We cultivate beautiful feelings of love and share them with beautiful gestures, cards and gifts. We look beyond our man-made chaotic state and seek the beauty which is our hope and salvation. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

Alberta Theriault

ERNEST EKBERG WEDS REBECCA ADAMS

The marriage of Rebecca Adams, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Adams of Lubbock, Texas to Ernest Ekberg, former President and current Adviser to ANCL, has been announced for December 19th in Lubbock. The couple will live in Lubbock for the rest of Ernie's air force service, and then expects to make their home in Elmwood, Mass.

CONVENTION DATES ANNOUNCED

Urbana, Ohio—The annual meeting of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Churches will be held at Urbana College June 24-27, 1971, it was announced by the Rev. Ernest O. Martin, of Newton, Mass., president of General Convention.

Mr. Martin announced also that Roger D. Paulson, Assistant to the President of Urbana College, has been named chairman of the planning committee, a position he held when the 1966 annual meeting was held at Urbana College.

Mr. Martin stated "It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we plan to return to Urbana College for our 147th annual meeting. We sincerely enjoyed our visit there in 1966 and with the additions to the Urbana campus we fully expect to enjoy our 1971 visit even more."

Several hundred delegates and observers attended the 1966 convention. Since then the college has constructed the Memorial Library, several dormitories and the new College-Community Center. The latter building, now in its final stages of completion, will serve as convention center.

Mr. Paulson had served as business manager at Urbana College for eight years before being named Assistant to the President for field operations on Oct. 3. He is a member of the board of managers of the Swedenborg School of Religion, located in Newton, Mass., and a secretary of the Illinois Association of the Swedenborgian Church.

"We are happy that the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Churches will again hold its annual meeting at Urbana College" Mr. Paulson said. "We were happily overwhelmed at the community response to our 1966 convention. Many members of the Swedenborgian Church are eager to return to Urbana because of the warm community welcome they received at that time."

Mr. Paulson announced that a meeting of the planning committee will be held at the college on Saturday, Oct. 31.

Urbana College President Dr. Paul A. Zehner expressed pleasure at the announcement of the 1971 convention location. "We are most happy to welcome the delegates to the annual meeting of the Swedenborgian Churches to Urbana College. We

count many firm friends among the church members and the occasion of the annual meeting will permit us to renew many fine friendships."

Urbana College was founded in 1850 by followers of the philosophy expounded by Swedish philosophy-theologian Emanuel Swedenborg. While not tied directly to the Swedenborgian Church, Urbana College has some links with the church. Several members of the college's board of trustees are members of the Swedenborgian Church.

The College's Memorial Library, completed in 1968, was financed largely through donations by members of the church.

'71 CONVENTION PLANNING STARTED

Planning for the 1971 annual meeting of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church got underway Saturday, Oct. 31, when members of the planning committee met at the Anderson Memorial Board Room at Urbana College. The Convention dates have been set as June 24-27.

The meeting was directed by Roger Paulson, chairman. Mr. Paulson is Assistant to the President of Urbana College for Field Operations.

During the five-hour meeting members discussed a theme for the annual meeting and possible topics for discussion groups. A turnout of about 500 persons is anticipated for the annual meeting.

Sub-committees were named for various planning projects. Further announcements about the annual meeting, including the format, business items and discussion topics, will be announced in subsequent issues of *The Messenger*.

Those attending the planning meeting included: Mr. Paulson, Gilbert T. Heddaeus, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Tom and Henrietta Zehner of Pittsburgh; Norman Bestor of Bay Village, Ohio; Dorothea Harvey of Urbana; Edwin G. Capon of Newton, Mass.; Ernest and Perry Martin of Weston, Mass.; Jim Zehner of Yellow Springs, Ohio; Horand and Cindy Gutfeldt of Urbana; F. Robert and Mareta Tafel of Cincinnati; Randall E. Laakko of Wilmington, Del.; Richard H. Tafel, Jr., of Cincinnati, and Richard D. Martin, Director of Public Information at Urbana College, who will be working with Robert Kirven in publicity.

OPENING OURSELVES UP TO THE LORD

High on a wooded knoll of some forty acres, outside Baltimore, stands the Koinonia Foundation, dedicated as a center and community for spiritual growth and truth.

After World War II, twelve spiritually minded men, including such giants as Sam Shoemaker, Rufus Jones, Frank Laubach and E. Stanley Jones, met together on January 1, 1951 for a period of silence and meditation for world settlement and peace. Out of this meeting grew this ecumenical Foundation, Koinonia, being the Greek word for shared fellowship in a common community. The present property comprises a large house, built sixty years ago, a stable which has been remodelled, and several new buildings.

In its early years, the Foundation gave spiritual and educational training to those who were going overseas to help people in technical service for the government in fifty different countries. Now in the 70's, it is launching a new program, "centering in the new generation (for young and all ages) under the new youthful leadership and direction of the Rev. David Poist." Mr. Poist has just completed five years as chaplain on a college campus. The community numbers thirty, of whom fifteen are staff members.

It was to this sheltered and beautiful place that thirty-two members of the Middle Atlantic Association, including the three ministers, came one golden afternoon in October for a week-end retreat in their quest for "Opening Themselves Upward to the Lord." All were graciously received by the staff, and a delicious dinner was served. The meals for the whole week-end were a gastronomical delight, with vegetables fresh from the organically nurtured Foundation's garden.

"What does one do on a Retreat?" is a question often asked. It is easy to report what one did, but hard to put into words what happened, as is the case in a spiritual experience which is different for each one. Perhaps you may gain some insight if I try to relate how we went about it.

Mr. Poist opened the session on Friday evening with a movie, "Why Man Creates," a history of man and his world produced by the Kaiser Aluminum Company. Some found the movie depressing

and all chaos—others delicious, enjoyable, enlightening, clever and wonderful. The meeting then broke up into three groups to discuss "Personal Joys and Concerns." In reporting back to the whole group, many of the joys and concerns were similar, such as the chaos in the world today and the lack of communication. But as in the movie, history shows man will rise to meet chaos. There is joy in knowing that the Lord is present in his world in the "splendor of the newness." There is the joy of creativity and the fun time with friends.

Some used the early hours on Saturday morning for prayer and meditation. Then followed a religious service. Phyllis Johannes, a teacher of religious dancing, interpreted through a background of words and gestures, the 23rd Psalm and the Lord's Prayer. The rest of the morning was spent in experiencing different ways in which we communicate with one another. Mr. Poist first read a poem, "The Mystery of Personality." We tried communicating through music, silence, body movements without the use of words. We ended by each one silently leading a blind-folded person around the grounds during which one had to put his trust in his partner. If only we had that much trust in the Lord, someone remarked!

After lunch the annual business meeting of the Association was held, at which the following officers were elected: President, the Rev. Richard H. Tafel; Vice-President, Mr. Gustave Ebel; Secretary, Mrs. Doris Tafel; Treasurer, Mr. Arthur Kalmbacher.

At four o'clock we again met under the able leadership of Mr. Poist, who was now David to all of us. He suggested that we plan a service for the following day. We had by this time become a fellowship working on the horizontal level. Now we started to work on the vertical, "looking upwards to the Lord." We decided to have a Communion Service. After listing the things we wanted in the service, which fell into six categories, each one volunteered to work on one of these. The Decoration and Place Group, which quickly decided to hold the service in the room where we had been meeting, began to gather decorations and to make banners of felt and burlap. The Holy Supper Committee met to discuss and gather the bread and wine (the bread was especially baked for this occasion). The Gestures Committee, in simple blue gowns, worked out their gestures. While the Music Committee was picking out suitable hymns, Brian Kingslake was composing music for a poem he had written. The Reading

Committee picked out the Biblical and Swedenborg readings. The Prayer Committee labored far into the evening, working into the prayers all the joys and concerns that had been listed.

At nine o'clock we all met in the "Coffee House," which was a room in the former stable. Bathed by candlelight, we listened to two young men sing and play the guitar. The staff had prepared delicious refreshments and joined us. It was a delightful, enjoyable and relaxing evening.

Sunday morning we came together after breakfast, each group with its homework well done. To our joy and amazement all the parts of the service fitted together so that by twelve o'clock we were ready for the celebration of Communion. Banners recaptured our joys and concerns, and beautiful leaves and fruits from the garden decorated the room. Chairs were arranged in a circle, with a card table flat on the floor in the center, holding the bread and wine. The staff and members of the Community joined us. The service opened with Jane Abbott singing the song for which Brian Kingslake had composed both words and music. Then followed the Invocation:

O Lord our God, whose Creative Spirit did at the beginning move upon the primeval chaos, bringing light out of darkness, creating the world and all that is therein out of the formless and the void: we gather here in your presence and come to your table in the joy of thanksgiving, praising you for life—life with its challenge, its joys, life with the mysterious splendor of its newness. Amen.

Then all sang the hymn, "Spirit of God descend upon my heart," followed by these Prayers of Confession, read by the different ones who helped compose them.

O Lord, as we come to you for the renewing of the life more abundant which you would give us, we bring not only our joys and our hopes, but would lay at your feet at the same time the burden of the doubts and fears of what we would do with that life.

We rejoice, O Lord, in the joy of being ourselves and in sharing ourselves with others.

Yet we confess, O Lord, to insensitiveness to others, to a lack of softness and understanding, to a failure to respond to others as they seek to communicate and reach out to us. Rather than enfolding others

in the embrace of our love, we too often exclude and hold them off.

We thrill, O Lord, to the new freedom to be ourselves: to discover and to express the uniqueness of the person you have created us to be!

But too often we inhibit our true feelings and hide our thoughts and ideas because of the pressure to conform, because of the fear of standing out from the crowd, or because of preoccupation with power and success.

We yearn, O Lord, to share ourselves more fully with others. We find joy in our fun time with friends, and find fulfillment in the special empathy we experience with those close to us.

But holding ourselves aloof from others outside that circle of friends and acquaintances, we mirror to ourselves the communication breakdown, and we add to the gap between people, institutions and to society as a whole.

And even within that tight circle of friends, we do not share ourselves freely and fully, even in our marriage with our partner, not even in relationship and fellowship with you, our Lord, our God, our Divine Friend, so that even our worship of you sometimes becomes a church spectator sport.

O Lord, renew us with your love and create a new spirit within us. As we pray that you may live more fully in us, may we also pray to give ourselves out to others more freely and more unservedly in love, in service and in fellowship.

Amen.

Psalm 39 was then read and to the accompaniment of two guitars, the hauntingly lovely "Kimbaya" was sung.

Then came the prayers of Intercession, again read by those who helped compose them.

O Lord Jesus, we bring to your feet all our problems, all the problems of our community, the nation and the world. Sweet Savior, we try to do things but don't always know what to do. Lord, both open our hearts and guide our minds and hands to do your work. Lord, send your help directly to the people bearing the burden of problems, some to lighten and help solve the problems and some to have the strength simply and patiently to bear the burdens, no matter how unfair, bitter

OPENING OURSELVES UP TO THE LORD (cont'd.)

or frustrating the situation may seem to us. Specifically, O Lord Jesus, we lift and hold up before you these problems:

For your church, Lord! We are poor little sheep whose desires for love and truth are often weak and whose ears are often waxed shut so that we do not hear or heed the messages from you or our neighbors. Startle us, Lord, shake us awake, set us afire. Lord, even if you cannot get through our defenses, at least help us have a little wish to be awake and on fire so that we may have a church which is on the upward way, opening up and doing your work.

For your children, Lord! They are lovely beings just starting toward angelhood, but, Lord, so many impediments stand in their way:

Poverty, the separation of black and white, the grinding environment of the slum ghetto; physical problems, such as brain damage and crippling diseases. They are beset by temptations and hazards which are particularly severe for the inexperienced, such as drugs.

Lord, bless and help our children. Make us soft and warm to their problems, and bless and help all who work in any way for the children.

For peace in the world, Lord! We would not cry, "Peace, peace" when there is no peace. But we would ask that unselfishness and your Spirit of Peace be pressed on our hearts and on the hearts of all mankind. Peace we particularly pray for, in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Lord, make us want peace.

Amen.

After a period of silence, Psalm 105 was read, followed by a prayer of Thanksgiving.

O Lord, gentle Shepherd of our souls, we thank you for the opportunity to follow in your footsteps and live a life according to the truths from your Holy Word and patterned after that perfect life of love you lived here on earth.

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, we acknowledge with heartfelt thanksgiving your presence in the world, speaking to your children through the beauty of nature, through the marvels of science, and through the lives of people whose hearts reflect your love.

We see your Spirit working in wondrous ways to bring closer the day when your Kingdom shall come and your will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. O Lord, God of all creation, we thank you for the hope and the promise of your unerring Providence operating in great and marvelous ways for our eternal salvation. Out of the chaos all around us we see your guiding hand working to fulfill your promise to make all things new.

O Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to be co-creators with you in the building of a better, newer world.

Amen.

All joined in singing "Be Present at our Table, Lord," after which was read the Church's teaching on Communion from the Book of Worship.

We all stood to sing, "Let Us Break Bread Together," while five members in simple blue gowns and reverently, beautifully accompanied the words with silent gestures. We then knelt and passed the bread, and then the wine, followed by the benedictory prayer:

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us.
May it fill our hearts with love for each other.
May it fill our minds with concern for one another.
May it fill our entire bodies with service for each other.

May we carry this peace with us out into his world, a blessing and to bless, in his name.

Amen.

We then took the pledge of fidelity to God and to our neighbor by folding our hands and, standing, raising the person next to us to his feet. The service closed with the singing of the five-fold Amen.

As we came together after dinner to evaluate our program for the week-end, we felt conscious of the tremendous spirit that prevailed during the Communion Service which had brought together all that we had done in a beautiful and worshipful way. The above is what we did. Perhaps in the prayers you may catch something of the feeling and experience of those present, and can see why we are looking forward to another retreat in the Spring.

Corinne B. Tafel

THE NEW CHURCH PACIFIST FELLOWSHIP

by
Gustave J. Bischof

Before America's entry into World War II there occurred much heart searching among Christians on the moral justification of war, including pacifism and conscientious objection to war. Swedenborgians were no exception as the then current issues of *The Messenger* attest.

A group of New-Churchmen were members of the religiously based Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) founded in 1915. The FOR is considered the largest religiously based pacifist organization in the United States. These Swedenborgians, on June 24th 1940, organized the New-Church Pacifist Fellowship (NCPF), elected officers and adopted a Statement of Position. The Statement was prepared by the Rev. Earl C. Hamilton who also became editor of its News Letter. As with other religiously motivated groups the NCPF later affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and remains so. One of its first activities was to urge the 1940 Convention meeting to adopt a resolution recognizing the New-Church conscientious objector and officially requesting the Government to extend to these the "same consideration as is accorded the Society of Friends and others." This was passed with the influential support of Ezra Hyde Alden. In contrast to World War I, the Selective Service Act did provide for alternate civilian service. The Act imposed rather strict eligibility provisions which have subsequently been liberalized by judicial interpretation.

While the NCPF has no official connection with Convention, considerable interest was shown, some New-Churchmen contributing to the News Letter, others, without reading our Position, questioned our purpose and a few were openly hostile. Perhaps it would be well to clarify what the NCPF does and does not stand for and no better way is to quote from its Statement of Position. (The complete Statement is obtainable on request from the address below) "We dedicate ourselves to a way of life which finds no place for war and which refuses to take up arms when war comes." Thus it opposes all wars, yet it goes far beyond a simple anti-war attitude. . . . "It involves a daily spiritual discipline which aims at removing the causes of war in our hearts and dispositions, and search for grace to do the just and decent thing in every situation which

meets us." Pacifism and conscientious objection to war are neither negative nor passive. "As a positive force, true pacifism inspires us to witness and work against every form of selfish exploitation suffered by individuals and groups in our present civilization." and "As Christian pacifists we feel moved to explore the possibilities of non-violent resistance to evil." The NCPF has had no reason to change this position.

For many of the intervening thirty years the NCPF has lost its older members. There is however a recurrent interest among our present generation of young Swedenborgians, sharpened by the awareness of the disparity between professed national ideals and performance. The exploitation of minorities, the tragic war in Indo-China and the technology of modern armies directed against soldier and civilian alike have led many more now to question the war system than in the days of World War II. Some young men are selective conscientious objectors (which the NCPF is not) and others have come to adopt the full conviction of objection for conscience to all war.

Pacifism is a lofty ideal, only imperfectly realized by the best. But it is well to hold the ideal before us and sacrifice in its behalf. How else is spiritual progress possible?

For Copies of NCPF Statement of Position Write

Gustave J. Bischof
108 Garfield St.
Garden City, N.Y. 11530

SWEDENBORGIAN HONORED

Miss Frances Vodola, a member of the Connecticut Association, in Stratford, Conn., recently received a Certificate of Merit from the Stratford Chamber of Commerce for her voluntary contribution toward the renovation and beautification of the Stratford Railroad Station. For this kind of effort, carrying the now-fashionable concern for the environment, down to the specificity and hard work of what Swedenborg calls "ultimates," *The Messenger* joins the Stratford C. C. and her employers, Bryant Electric, in a word of thanks and appreciation to Miss Vodola.

TOWARD A RENEWED CHURCH

Matt. 6:19-21 John 13:34, 35
Matt. 9:16,17 Rev.21:1-7

Our church, known as the New Church, proclaims the newness of its rational doctrines as opposed to the often contradictory, confusing beliefs of what we term the Old Church. Our name derives from the apocalyptic vision of the City of God which is the New Jerusalem. Our charter is a new heaven, a new earth and the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven.

This is a large claim for any church to make. What entitles us to this stupendous assertion? What have we done to deserve, preserve, enhance the pearl of great price? True, we have published and distributed the writings of Swedenborg, but have we really accepted or helped inaugurate the New Age, ordained by the Second Coming and made so evident by the vastly changing world of the past 200 years—changes which require not merely adjustments, but revolutions in thinking and doing, changes in customs, values, priorities, and loyalties.

It is universally accepted that truth endures without change. That applies to the truth and not to any man's version of truth at a particular moment in time and space. As our tools for acquiring knowledge become more refined, old hypotheses are shown to be either false or at best approximations of truth. The scientist knows that his discoveries and formulations are mere steps in paths leading to new truths which in turn will yield to still newer ones.

All our thinking and formulating likewise, whether of social values, methods of governance, national priorities, or even religious attitudes must, to be viable, undergo constant destruction (or vastation), rebirth, mutation, and evolution. Why should a church enshrine the attitudes appropriate a century ago or even of a generation past with the expectation of their propriety today? To be fully new, to lay claim to newness demands continual rebirth. To meet the challenge of the times requires continuing renewal, strange as that term may sound to a New-Churchman!

I think we New-Churchmen are faced with a particularly severe temptation to delude ourselves with

the belief that since we know a superior revelation—a new dispensation—we can sit back comfortably, secure in the feeling that the last words have been spoken, that contemporary thought is but a passing phase full of sound and fury. Need we not examine and re-examine what we hold to be true? Have our questioning voices been silenced?

Many of our youngest and keenest minds have drifted away. Our numbers diminish while our average age increases. Too often creativity is stifled in the name of a deceptive harmony. We seem unaware of the dictate that renewal comes not from harmony, but flourishes with the clash of ideas and confrontations, tempered by mutual trust, respect, and understanding. When a church is spared the travail of rebirth it is at the very cost of survival.

Churches throughout Christendom, whether it be the staid, tradition-laden Church of Rome, or members of the National Council of Churches are today facing an agonizing period of soul searching. All suffer a decline in membership relative to population growth. The impact is most severe among the inner city churches. With few exceptions, vast edifices built to house hundreds attract pitifully few. Financial support on local and national levels declines. Population shifts account for much of the malaise in the cities, but not for that in growth areas. The cause seems far more fundamental. The Church, and I speak of no particular denomination, has lost its position of authority and moral leadership. The young, the idealistic, the vigorous, the articulate, the molders of our future no longer even challenge it. They regard it as irrelevant and impotent if not hypocritical. They simply ignore it, assured that it will wither away along with other anachronisms. One mentions the Church; they reply, "Who cares?"

The period of our Church's greatest growth occurred in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was a time of great invention, industrial expansion, massive immigration, the opening of the west; a time of civic corruption, of great wealth, ostentatiously displayed for the few and the bitter degradation of poverty for the many. It was a time of astonishing advances in the arts and science, yet of disease and high infant mortality. Scientists explained the universe in mechanistic terms, confident in their materialistic concept and derisive of all that could not be measured. Many believed in inevitable, automatic progress toward the good and beautiful and others lived in

dread of predestined hellfire.

In these pews sat people of influence, of consequence, of culture and of wealth. The latter paid the piper and called the tune. The New Church was infected by the general optimism. We had merely to publish and distribute and general acceptance must follow. Collateral literature flourished with numerous tracts and periodicals. New Churchmen were also known for their devotion to reform and social movements.

How all this has changed. Old methods fail to stem the tide of erosion. Nowhere else has the failure been more manifest than in the widening gap between young and old. The young are impatient idealists (those who still care). More than anything they are appalled by the abyss separating our beliefs and practices. They have little patience with abstract theology, and traditional forms. All this leaves them cold and they want out if that is what the church is.

Forty years ago the emphasis in college christian associations was on Bible study, inspirational talks, socials, and on regional and national conferences. Twenty years ago study commissions on areas of Christian responsibility predominated. Now they go into the ghetto, tutoring youngsters, steering them toward college, leading others in crafts and games. This is *action*, giving of oneself—becoming involved.

Is that not likewise the mood of *our* young people? Listen to two of our Leaguers:

"Ritual just doesn't strike me as being an effective way to give thanks. I can not imagine that our God of love would prefer us to spend a lot of time and money erecting sanctuaries and following prescribed orders of worship to our using the time and money to live and love and share." *

and again (speaking of an unorthodox communion service):

"I had a difficult time trying to hold back the tears of love and joy that I experienced at this service. I can say with all sincerity that I got something out of communion that I never have before. It was real and meant something important." **

To delineate what has happened is comparatively easy. What should and can be done to revitalize and renew the Church is vastly more difficult and

must needs be limited to the tentative and suggestive often in the form of questioning. In all this I speak in a spirit of profound humility.

Foremost in any renewal is the question: have we the *will* to change, to discard some of the past? Have we the receptive mind and the vitality to test, reject and experiment in new and untried areas? Do we really *want* to change? Daily we pray, "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven." Are these mere incantations or are they part of our life expressed in justice, compassion and loving service one to another in our troubled world? New Churchmen often repeat, all too glibly, I fear, "All religion has relation to life and the life of religion is to do good." Has this become a hackneyed catchword rather than a start in thinking through all that it might imply?

Renewal begins with an awareness of the inadequacy of past endeavors, even though these forms of churchmanship have become our emotional ties to the Church. May we not become more hospitable to change and better listeners? *Living faith*, like regeneration and unlike wealth, can not be inherited. Each life and each generation must struggle to meet its own peculiar temptations forging a faith relevant to the contemporary human condition, so that religion *truly* has relation to life.

Worship of our Lord and Saviour consists not merely in church services, but in every aspect and act of christian life. A form of church service touching our hearts in the past is not necessarily effective with a new generation. Rather than taking offense at new expressions of worship, should we not rejoice in the vitality generating such renewal? Let us welcome and encourage new ways of drawing closer to the Lord in love and peace one with another.

I would suggest that our reliance has been too heavily placed on dogma and too little on love. Doctrine is the necessary skeleton on which hangs the flesh of religion—but who warms to a skeleton? People by and large are not attracted, initially at least by doctrine as such, but by the *quality* of our life. We may learn something from the lovely advice Abe Lincoln gave his law partner, "Don't shoot too high—aim lower and the common people will understand you. They are the ones you want to reach. The educated and refined people will understand you anyway. If you aim too high your ideas will go over the heads of the masses and only hit those who need no hitting."

TOWARD A RENEWED CHURCH (cont'd.)

Let us put less trust in the efficacy of imposing structure, elegant furnishings, cultivated exchange, polished sermons, and beautiful music. The Lord's earthly ministry was among the poor, the simple, the uncultured. As He trod the dusty roads of Galilee, Jesus shared the simple joys, anxieties, and sorrows of the people.

While no church should engage in politics, it can not isolate itself from political decisions for they touch every aspect of our lives. At least almost every public issue vexing our locality or nation involves a moral judgment. It should not and can not be ignored by a church claiming relevancy to life. That is not to say that the church can propose an easy or even a wise answer. Yet it is the duty of our spiritual leaders to arouse awareness of the moral implications, and exhort the members to act on moral principle, sacrificing self-interest for the greater common good. Have we sidestepped this duty by virtue of timidity or worse by an indolent avoidance of studying the issues?

Finally, we rely too heavily on our ordained ministers and give of ourselves too little. One can not reasonably expect to find the ingredients of saint, counsellor, eloquent teacher, and business manager all in one lovable extrovert! A fairly new concept in medicine is group practice, consisting of teams of specialists in fields such as internal medicine, psychiatry and social medicine. Would this not apply to the christian ministry? This would be far beyond most congregational resources, but not beyond local interdenominational cooperation. Thus, we could reach and minister to the needs of many more. The talents of the laity could also be productively employed. Furthermore, our idealistic and activity-oriented young people might find a rewarding outlet in their *own* church.

Our doctrines proclaim the oneness of God. Swedenborg emphasises the oneness and wholeness of love, wisdom, and power or use. Have we too long neglected love and use to the detriment of wisdom?

Renewal requires but two things—Divine Influx and human receptivity. We are assured of the former; are we ready, yes anxious, to receive? Have we the will to excise our personal, often petty, loves and hates to make room for Him who is ever standing at the door?

G. Bischof

The dialogue will continue in an early issue with a response to Mr. Bischof by the Rev. Clayton Priestnal.

*Cathy Thomas, *The Messenger*, Feb. 1970

**Ernie Ekberg, *The Messenger*, Nov. 1969

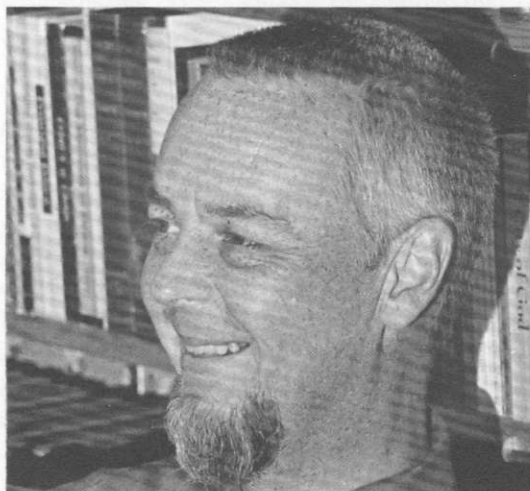
SWEDENBORGIAN STUDENTS AT URBANA COLLEGE



Several members of the Swedenborgian Church are enrolled at Urbana College this year. Shown seated (from left) are Becky Haverkos of Urbana, Lynn Ashbridge of Philadelphia, Pa.; the Turley sisters, Suzie and Cynthia of Claremont, Cal., and Bellevue, Wash. (depending upon which sister you ask), and Betsy Bishop of Bellevue, Wash. Standing are Sweiyi Fiddo of Nigeria and Dr. Horand Gutfeldt, a member of the UC faculty. Not shown are two other students, Peter Ball of Columbus, Ohio, and Ross Woofenden of St. Louis, Missouri.

WOOFENDEN RECEIVES PH. D.

The Rev. William R. Woofenden of St. Louis became *Doctor* Woofenden on October 31, 1970, when the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Philosophy was conferred by St. Louis University. A brief summary of his thesis, *Swedenborg's Philosophy of Causality* will appear in an early issue of *The Messenger*.



Dr. Wm. R. Woofenden whose smile is not coincidental to S.L.U. Dean Eigel's "Sincere congratulations on your accomplishment and the fine work you have done."

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Urbana

Perry and I flew to Urbana on Friday, October 30, to attend meetings of the Board of Education and the 1971 Convention Planning Committee. We were the over-night guests of Horand and Cindy Gutfeldt and on Saturday morning were greeted by the New Church students studying at Urbana. These students are developing a real sense of community and have accepted responsibility for the leadership of some of the worship services at the Urbana Church.

San Francisco

We arrived in San Francisco on Saturday evening, October 31, and were entertained by Erwin and Lisa Reddekopp and their son Brian. I preached at the San Francisco church on Sunday morning and had the privilege of installing Erwin as Pastor of the San Francisco parish. Luncheon was served following the service and Perry and I were able to meet many of the people. We greeted Col. and Mrs. Swedenborg and visited with Margit Tobisch.

We were glad to be able to visit with David and Priscilla Garrett in El Cerrito and to meet with the Church Committee of the El Cerrito Church. The church sponsors a number of lively, creative groups that are concerned with the nurture of spiritual life.

San Diego

Garry and Joanna White met us at the airport in San Diego on Wednesday, Nov. 4 and whisked us away to Tijuana for lunch and sightseeing. In the evening we had dinner with the members of the church committee and then met with members of the church. The church has been without a minister for the last few years and is served by a capable team of lay leaders under the chairmanship of Dr. Garry White. Garry has also served the Los Angeles Church in leading weekend retreats.

Wayfarers' Chapel

On Friday and Saturday, November 6 and 7, I met with the Board of Managers of the Wayfarers' Chapel. Special attention was given to plans for the development of the Visitors' Center and we consulted with the architect, Lloyd Wright, and his son, Eric Wright.

Bob and Betsy Young were hosts at a dinner for board members and we were glad to see Bob up and about. He had been seriously ill for some time but

is now regaining his strength. After the board meeting on Saturday, Bob conducted four weddings at the chapel. The staff at the chapel performed yeoman service during Bob's illness and special thanks go to Calvin Turley for his ministerial leadership.

Los Angeles

I conducted the worship service at the Los Angeles Church on Sunday, November 8, and we were guests at a reception following the service. A circle was formed and we spent some time in a frank and lively discussion of the future plans of the Los Angeles Church. It is hoped that a regional ministry can be developed to serve the southern California area, including Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego.

We were the overnight guests of Irving and Pearl McCallum. Irving is the chairman of the Board of Managers of the Wayfarers' Chapel and president of the Los Angeles Church. Pearl is organist and Sunday School superintendent and in her spare time teaches school five days a week.

Claremont

In Claremont, scene of the 1969 convention, we were guests of Calvin and Marilyn Turley. Cal is a graduate student at the School of Theology at Claremont and expects to receive his Doctor of Religion degree this coming year. He is currently working one day a week at the Wayfarers' Chapel, assisting Bob Young.

Newton

Perry and I returned to Boston on Monday, November 9, and were met at the airport by the Rev. Messrs. Bob Kirven, Paul Zacharias, Erwin Reddekopp, Brian Kingslake, Cal Turley and Randy Laakko. A red carpet and brass band could have added little to such a reception! The Swedenborg School of Religion station wagon was filled to capacity as we drove out to the theological school in Newton. By 8 P.M. I was immersed in a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers. We entertained committee members for dinner at our home on Tuesday and were soon back at our regular routine, whatever that is.

Perry and I are grateful to the Women's Alliance for providing travel money so that she could accompany me on this trip. She hopes to share some of her impressions of the trip in a future issue of *The Messenger*.

Ernest O. Martin

THE MESSENGER

DECEMBER 1970

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RE M I N D E R

1971 CONVENTION AT URBANA COLLEGE

JUNE 24-27

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