

# ***THE MESSENGER***

Official Organ of the Swedenborgian Church

JANUARY 1970



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In this first issue of the new decade, *The Messenger* is mostly devoted to 1969: the meeting of the National Council of Churches, the first session of the full council since we joined that body three years ago; impressions of President Martin from visits he made late in the year; and a salute to the passing of one of the great intellectual leaders of our church, the Rev. William F. Wunsch. One article, published on the occasion of Swedenborg's birthday, looks backward to his philosophical work more than two hundred years ago, but also forward to work that is still to be done.

But something should be said directly about the time into which we step this month. It is the dawning of a new year, the year of the New Church World Assembly in London. It is the dawning of a new decade, during which forces already in motion will produce greater changes in the life of our church than any of us have seen before. It is—as we are reminded by such diverse media as the works of the great psychiatrist C. G. Jung, the musical *Hair*, and speakers at the American Academy of Religion in Boston in October—the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, the age of spirituality, whose description by astrologers bears such remarkable similarities to the new age described by Swedenborg (himself an Aquarian).

Even those who are not going to London next July  
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can rejoice that Swedenborgians from all over the world are going to meet, get acquainted, share some of their common concerns, and share the experience of a first-time event. Even those who do not personally want their life and their church to change, can rejoice that new horizons of opportunity are opening to the church, even as new challenges to its very existence begin to exert their threat. Even those who disapprove of astrological interest in the Aquarian Age, and those who have not fully determined what to make of it (as I have not), can rejoice that so many in our culture are beginning to expect a change from our present situation to a greater freedom of the spirit, and a deeper and more universal recognition of the spirituality of man, his world, and his truest values.

In this sense, I can wish you all the joy of a truly happy new year.

But I want to wish you something more. I wish you the joy, not only of being happy at where you are in the new year, but the joy of being *on the way* to where you're going. Any real awareness of the spiritual reality that vitalizes the appearances we usually call life, includes a consciousness of process, and a sense of exhilaration in its movement. God himself is both Being and Becoming; and the level of life we know is made up of what we are and what we yet shall be. The fullest life is one which exults in the process of becoming, greeting change with enthusiasm, and growth with joy.

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The most rewarding experiences of the presidency are the opportunities to visit with church members in different parts of the country. These experiences include board and committee meetings, meetings of local churches and associations, worship services, social activities and receptions, and visits in homes.

A highlight of 1969 was my 10-day trip along the west coast, concluding with a visit in Colorado Springs. On November 14 I flew to Los Angeles for a meeting of the Board of Managers of the Wayfarer's Chapel. Bob and Betsy Young were delightful hosts at a supper for board members and their wives, and then we met in their living room to discuss the concerns of the Chapel. The meeting continued next day at the chapel and we approved plans for the renovation of the Visitors' Center, and the preparation of exhibits that will communicate in a more effective way the major contributions of our church.

Following the Chapel Board meeting, I was the guest of Cal and Marilyn Turley. Calvin is pursuing two years of graduate study at the School of Theology in Claremont, California, which will lead to a Doctor of Religion degree. He also spends one day a week at the Wayfarers' Chapel counselling with individuals and couples, and conducting weddings. It takes real courage and commitment to return to the classroom after 17 years in the field, and Cal has the moral support of his wife, Marilyn, as well as the benefit of her typing and secretarial skills.

The next stop was Oakland, California, where I was met by Ells Seibert, president of the San Francisco Society and a newly-elected member of the General Council of Convention. His wife, Jan, served tea in their beautiful home in El Cerrito overlooking San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge. On Sunday and Monday I was the guest of Othmar and Margit Tobisch in Berkeley. They are gracious hosts and we enjoyed discussing a number of mutual concerns. We were particularly interested in talking about plans for the forthcoming World Assembly in London. Without the Tobisches there almost certainly would be no 1970 Assembly.

While in the Bay area, I also visited with my dear friends, David and Priscilla Garrett. They invited me to meet with the Leaders' Group of the El Cerrito Church, and this was a stimulating experience. The group is exciting, creative, imaginative, and committed to spiritual growth. They have a great deal to share, and they are also anxious to learn more about current developments in other centers of our church.

To help you understand the approach of the El Cerrito church, I quote the following criteria listed in one of their recent bulletins:

- 1) We are not an institution that caters to the collective mind.
- 2) Our program is designed for searching people who are considering working at their own lives.
- 3) We are not a church in the generally accepted sense serving a wide range of social needs.
- 4) Our primary interest is the intersection of religious experience and psychological insight as it helps the way to wholeness and thus a healthier world.
- 5) The focus of change is individuals who by working alone and in groups form a community.

On Tuesday morning a helicopter took me from Berkeley to the San Francisco airport, and a short time later I was in Portland, Oregon. Mr. Warren Arrington, devoted Swedenborgian and a long-time leader of the church in Portland, entertained me during my stay. I enjoyed the hospitality of his home and had the pleasure of meeting his wife and two college-age children.

The Portland Church is without a minister and the active group is very small. The decision has been made to sell the church building and parsonage and negotiations are being carried on with prospective purchasers. At a meeting that I attended at the church, members discussed how they might carry on their mission as a church without a building and facilities.

Harold Taylor met me at the airport in Vancouver as I visited British Columbia for the first time. The region is awe-inspiring in its beauty with the mountains meeting the sea and large areas set aside in park lands rich with verdant growth. Harold was a wonderful guide in sharing the beauty of Vancouver, and he and his family entertained me in their cozy, modern apartment.

The church in Vancouver was served for many years by the Rev. John Zacharias, father of Eric and Paul, ministers in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, and Kitchener, Ontario, respectively. Harold Taylor served as a missionary minister for several years and was ordained in 1965. He now leads the church in a new phase of mission and activity. Their church building has been sold and worship held in private homes. A search is being made for new quarters that can serve as a center for worship, a book room, and counseling center.

Colorado Springs, the last stop on my western tour, has a beauty all its own, dominated by Pike's Peak and the Garden of the Gods. Hundreds of thousands of tourists are attracted to the area in the summer time, and a growing number of people return to settle down and make their homes.

Rollo Billings and his wife Gwen have built up a lively church congregation in Colorado Springs. The average age of the church members is considerably younger than that of most of our churches. The lay leadership is vigorous and the spirit is positive. The church building is modest in size, but very functional and conducive to worship and meditation. Two choirs provide strong leadership and support to the worship services.

Members entertained me in their homes, took me on a tour of the famed Air Force Academy, and greeted me at a dinner and reception at Egmont Vrooman's ranch. Mr. Vrooman has offered to contribute land in the Garden of the Gods for a Swedenborgian Chapel. He drove through the area with me and pointed out the fascinating rock formations.

On Sunday I preached at the morning worship service and met with members at the coffee hour. On a television set in the church social hall, we watched video-tape movies of the Saturday evening reception. This must have been a Convention first! Rollo and Gwen then drove me to Denver where we had dinner together, and I boarded a plane for Boston and home.

Five days later I flew westward again, but this time only to Detroit. I attended a meeting of the General Board of the National Council of Churches, preached at the Detroit church, met with a committee to discuss candidates for the pastorate of the church upon the resignation of Erwin Reddekopp, and then attended the triennial assembly of the National Council of Churches. The highlights of this assembly are described elsewhere in this issue of *The Messenger*.

*Ernest O. Martin*

## Triennial Meeting

### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES MEETS IN DETROIT

The sense that a new style of operation had begun for the National Council of Churches characterized its triennial General Assembly meeting in Detroit November 30 through December 5, attended by President Ernest Martin, Reverends Edwin Capon, Erwin Reddekopp, Paul Zacharias and Richard Tafel representing the Swedenborgian Church.

Delegates seemed to slip naturally into a "forum" role even though they early gave up any attempt to officially define it for the NCC. For the first time in Council history, many groups and individuals who have largely been on the fringes of the Church participated in plenaries to demand some of its power.

Rather than assuming a defensive role about the attackers, a sense of confidence became apparent and a feeling that if the NCC is to live at all, this would be its life.

Chief among the dissident groups were black militants who ran their own candidates for the positions of president and general secretary of the council--thus providing the first contest in its history--and radical whites whose performances provided a distinct change of style from Robert's Rule of Order.

Other claimants were women, Mexican-Americans, American Indians, Alaskan natives, and conscien-

tious draft objectors. Delegates were forced into facing the issue which is faced by young men drafted into an "immoral" war when the assembly was asked to accept and "hold in trust" the draft card of a Hope College student, James Rubins.

The assembly elected Dr. Cynthia Wedel its president for the 1969-72 triennium. Mrs. Wedel defeated the Rev. Albert Cleage, pastor of Detroit's Shrine of the Black Madonna, by 387 to 93 votes. It also re-elected Dr. R. H. Edwin Espy general secretary of the council. Dr. Espy defeated the Rev. Leon Watts by a 382 to 100 vote. Rev. Watts is an AME Zion pastor, employed by the New York Presbytery, and a member of the boards of the National Committee of Black Churchmen and the Black Economic Development Conference.

Bishop Frederick D. Jordan of the AME church was elected first vice-president, the Rev. Robert G. Stephanopoulos of the Greek Orthodox Church secretary, and Carl W. Tiller of the American Baptist Convention, treasurer.

Heading the four major program units of the council, and thereby becoming vice-presidents, are the Rev. Andrew White (AME) for the Division of Christian Education, the Rev. D. Kenneth Neigh (UPUSA) for the Division of Christian Life and Mission, and the Rev. John F. Schaefer (UM) for the Division of Overseas' Ministries. Bishop S. G. Spottswood (AMEZ) won a contest for the chairmanship of the Division of Christian Unity over the Rev. Bishop Alexis (Ex. Russian Orthodox) by 357 to 119 votes.

A total of 18 vice-presidents-at-large were elected, four more than usual. Two were elected to give the younger generation a voice in Council affairs.

Major addresses were given by Dr. John Gardner, Chairman of the National Urban Coalition, and Dr. Edwin O. Reischauer. Dr. Gardner said urban problems would not be solved until the use of public monies, the structure of government at all levels and the system of population distribution are changed.

Dr. Reischauer's subject was Vietnam. He predicted that the U. S. will cease combat there some time in 1970 and pull out completely by early 1972.

The Assembly self-image was influenced both by

theory and the events of four packed days and nights. Chief theoretical contribution was a proposal by General Secretary R. H. Edwin Espy, suggesting a broadened inter-church organization emphasizing issue-oriented cooperative actions. Under the plan, a "General Ecumenical Council" could include Roman Catholics and communions not presently associated in the Council. Action on such areas as theology, worship, evangelism, education and social change would be undertaken within the over-all Council by free associations of communions concerned for particular issues.

A major part of the time and energy of Assembly delegates was, according to the announced agenda, to have gone into four rounds of small-group working sessions. Thirty-two groups meeting in function rooms of Detroit's Cobo Hall would review and evaluate Council achievements of the past triennium, and establish goals for the coming three years. The mass of new resolutions and unforeseen encounter-actions by groups with a message for the churches forced continuance of plenary sessions. One meeting only of the working groups was held. The Goals Committee referred documents and statements from that meeting, from minority and youth groups, and from officials of the Council to the goal-setting job of the new General Board.

Issues arising from America's war in Vietnam loomed large in the concerns before the Assembly. A resolution on the war, debated, referred to committee for more work, and eventually amended and adopted, notes the long history of church concern with human and spiritual issues of the war, and speaks out on such immediate issues as disengagement, the U. S. and the Saigon government, negotiations, dissent, and the taking of risks for peace.

The Canadian Council of Churches, a week prior to the N.C.C. meeting, had expressed solidarity with the call for an end to American military activities in Vietnam.

On alleged massacres of civilians in Vietnam, the Council voted for an international probe under the U. N. or International Red Cross auspices; an additional Congressional inquiry was also encouraged in the Assembly resolution.

Resolutions, calling for an end of Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and expressing brotherly concern for the churches and people of Eastern

Europe and South Africa, were referred to a committee for further study. In other action, delegates instructed the NCC to interpret to American churches the situation of displaced Palestinians.

The Assembly went through agonized hours over the issue of young James Rubins, a conscientious objector from Hope College (American Reformed Church), Holland, Mich. Rubins, relying on previous N.C.C. policy statements on Religious Obedience and Civil Disobedience, asked the assembly to "hold his draft card in trust," stating that he could not in conscience comply with Selective Service rules requiring him to cooperate with the system. The request was rejected, but in an unofficial ceremony some 125 persons showed their concurrence with Rubins', in any surrender of the card he might decide upon. Legal opinions had been secured indicating that by so gathering with him the standees became liable to charges of conspiracy.

The Assembly commended peaceful dissent in protest of the war, and particularly participation by churchmen in the October and November peace activities in the nation and in Washington, D. C.

The body also endorsed Administration initiatives to end use or production of chemical and biological war weapons.

And churchmen were urged to abandon "Christmas As Usual" in the coming days in solemn recognition of their share in such incidents as alleged massacres of civilians. Donations to aid S. Vietnamese victims, and participation in protest actions, were recommended to replace the typical spending of the season.

Turning to domestic issues, the Assembly was confronted with vigorous presentations in behalf of the rights and claims of women, youth, the poor, black Americans, American Indians, Hispanic Americans and Alaskan natives.

An Indian Board is to be formed within the N.C.C. to aid American Indians and Alaskan natives in enforcing their rights and correcting grievances.

The General Board (interim governing body of the Council) is instructed to confer with a continuing group of "Crisis Consultants" representing minority, youth, and church-renewal viewpoints to establish goals and actions for the next three years.

Pastoral care for and tangible aid to some 60,000 draft age refugees now in Canada is to be promoted through the N.C.C. while pastoral care is developed at the local church level for parents of the exiles.

The Constitution of the N.C.C. was amended to allow for broadened representation of youth and laity on boards and committees and in the Assembly itself.

Black Manifesto author James Forman made an unscheduled appearance before delegates. He accused the Council of attempting to divide black communities and demanded distribution of the organization's assets as reparations to Negroes. Mr. Forman was introduced by the Rev. Calvin Marshall, chairman of the Black Economic Development Conference. Mr. Marshall called him the "selfless black prophet of the 20th century," urged withdrawal of missionaries from overseas and their reassignment to work against white racism in the United States.

The national government was urged to establish a major agency on population control for the United States, empowered also to aid other countries in that field.

In a message to the concurrent White House Conference on Hunger, the assembly supported goals of full employment, income maintenance, and direct feeding for the nation's undernourished poor.

The assembly heard vigorous criticism of hurricane "Camille" relief efforts in Mississippi, as that state's sole black legislator charged official discrimination by both state and Federal agencies. Adopted was a resolution calling for church-related investigation of alleged abuse in the disaster relief program.

Repeatedly during the four-day assembly meeting, the emerging black critique of traditional white institutional and personal style was vigorously expressed in formal presentations and unscheduled floor debate. The "open forum" aspect, increasingly apparent as the assembly moved along, was reinforced by activities of youth and church-renewal groups, granted or seizing time for dramatic actions before and among the delegates and visitors.

Midway through sessions, delegates took an evening off to listen to a sacred concert by Duke Ellington and his band in the giant Cobo Hall arena.

In the vast display area of Cobo Hall, exhibits of church-related programs surrounded a "coffee house" where creative "acts" took place on the stage.

More than 200 journalists from the public and religious press covered the assembly, while nearly continuous filming of the event for television use assured wide knowledge and discussion of National Council actions in coming weeks.

### NEW NCC PRESIDENT MRS. THEODORE O. WEDEL SURVEYS FUTURE

In times past, a newly elected President may have been able with some confidence to outline plans for the years ahead. No one can do that today. We don't know what new crisis will arise tomorrow, or next week. My hopes and plans are only to be as open as possible, to try to really *hear* what important people—the young, the Blacks, the poor, the oppressed—are saying; and to work with all of you in the churches and in the NCC staff to make this Council of ours a better instrument for God's rise.

This Assembly has certainly told us—loud and clear—that our old ways of doing things are not adequate. There must be big changes, and they must be made faster than we think possible. I'm quite sure that God—along with the young, the Blacks and others—cares very little for our traditions, our accustomed procedures, or maybe even for Roberts' Rule of Order.

### SWEDENBORG'S "HOLISM" AND "EMPIRICAL REVELATION"

Generally speaking it is safe to say that most generalizations about philosophers and theologians are dangerous. The danger is endured, however, because of the great convenience afforded by the possibility of grouping thinkers according to general parallels and similarities in their thought, and giving names to these groups. The groupings end up concealing wide differences that occur within them, and the names for them are often meaningless except as a commonly accepted identification—a kind of shorthand for an agreed-upon set of ideas. Most students who have had a year's study in phil-

I don't know tonight what these changes will be. But I do know a few things.

1. There is a great vitality in this movement in which we are engaged. The liveliness of this Assembly attests to that.

2. There are great moral dilemmas facing our nation and the world today. The Church must not just "speak" to these. We have to find ways to *act*!

3. We have in the Churches and in the NCC great reserves of ability, creativity and good will. We can and we must mobilize these for bold new thrusts for peace, justice and unity.

No one person can lead the NCC. From tonight until three years from tonight, this must be a team operation. One concrete proposal I want to put forward is that we figure out a way to have permanent caucuses of any groups which feel underrepresented in the General Assembly or the General Board, and that we provide opportunities for these caucuses to feed in their ideas, proposals and criticisms of all actions or proposed actions. I can imagine a Black caucus, a youth caucus, a women's caucus, an Indian caucus, a Spanish-American caucus, a laymen's caucus. Through this route, I would hope these groups would gain enough power to influence all the life of the Council. Indeed, they might become so powerful that the white, male ecclesiastics would have to form a caucus too!

osophy know a fairly wide range of these group titles, and a number of prominent examples of philosophers or theologians in each group. One of the difficulties encountered in trying to talk about Swedenborg in relation to other thinkers of his time and the present arises from the fact that he has not been conventionally assigned to any of these standard categories. Some attempt should be made to do so, and for my 1965 dissertation, *Emmanuel Swedenborg and the Revolt Against Deism*, I made a beginning in a couple of direc-

The groupings are made on the basis of a particular philosopher's answer to two fundamental questions: 1) What is?, and 2) How do I know? The answer to the first question, which represents his conception of reality, is called in the common shorthand of philosophical jargon, his *ontology*. His answer to the second question which represents his psychological theory of the process by which we know anything, and the standards by which he considers any knowledge to be certain, is called his *epistemology*. Generally these two answers are sufficiently related that anyone who is labeled along with one group because of his ontology, is classed in about the same group with regard to his epistemology. There are three broad categories into which most philosophers and theologians can be placed according to their ontology before they are divided into sub-groups for more sophisticated study. Perhaps what has been said so far will be a little clearer, and the problem concerning Swedenborg will become a little more evident, when these three groups have been described briefly.

One answer to the question, "What is?," is a simple pointing of the finger. This desk is, the floor is; there are trees, flowers and all kinds of things that make an impression on the senses. This kind of ontology is called *materialism* and it includes the specific denial that there can be anything which cannot be seen, touched, etc. Another way of defining the limits between what is and what is not for a materialist, is to say that if anything *is*, anything else that is cannot occupy the same place at the same time without moving the first thing. This, of course, rules out saying that love is, or truth is, because it is perfectly possible to have truth and a desk in the same place at the same time. This materialistic view also means that there are no such things as ideas (ideas are the name we give for certain mechanical or chemical changes of the brain), and nothing spiritual can be considered as real. The epistemology that goes with a materialistic ontology usually is a fairly simple reliance on the senses: I know what my senses perceive, and I do not know anything else. The materialistic ontology says there is nothing else to be known; the materialistic epistemology says that whether there is or not I cannot know it.

Way at the other extreme, there is the kind of answer that is usually called *idealistic*. This has nothing to do with the popular use of the term, as referring to "high ideals" or the like. The idealists' answer to the question "what is?" is that ideas are

real, or that spiritual things are real, and nothing else *really is*. Like the materialists' answer, this one carries with it a definition of what is not: tables, trees, horses, etc. are not. The *idea* of a table is real, and so is the idea of a tree or a horse. What we write on, climb on, or ride on is nothing real, but a form of an idea. The reason my toe hurts as I stub it on my desk is not because wood is hard (since there is no such thing as wood) but because the idea of a desk is as real as the idea of my toe. The answer to the question "How do I know?" comes rather easily to the idealist: I know because I have the idea in my mind and whatever is in my mind is real.

As usual, when there are two positions as extreme as this, there is one in the middle. The most common compromise between materialism and idealism is some form of *dualism*. A dualist says that material things are real, mental and spiritual things are real, and—though both are equally real—they have nothing whatsoever in common. This is a fine compromise as far as ontology goes, because it grants what is obviously right about both materialism and idealism, while denying what is obviously wrong about materialistic and idealistic definitions of what is not. It runs into one big problem for a theologian, because if what is spiritual and what is material have nothing in common, then how do you relate God (who is spirit) with the material world? But even before it runs into that difficulty ontological dualism runs into a bigger problem with epistemology. "How do I know?" is a hard question to answer, when knowledge is spiritual, a large part of the things to be known are material, and spirit and matter have no point of contact. If that problem sounds hard don't be surprised. I don't know of anybody who has resolved it satisfactorily yet.

It would seem that materialism, idealism and dualism exhaust the logical possibilities for groups to put philosophers in; and practically speaking, they just about do. Aristotle, Hobbes, Bertrand Russell and a host of other familiar names can be classed as materialists. Plato, Hegel, Charles Saunders Peirce and others are idealists. Descartes, Kant, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas and others are dualists. In one way or another most of the famous philosophers and theologians can be put into one of these groups though a few wind up in one group with their ontology and another with their epistemology. But then there are a few that will not fit anywhere, and one of the most obstinate in this regard is Emmanuel Swedenborg.

Swedenborg considered material things to be real and he considered spiritual things to be real; but unlike anyone who can be called a dualist, he found a universal, inherent, necessary and consistent relationship between all material and spiritual things. Even before he developed his principles of biblical interpretation, he defined this relationship as "correspondence." Given the fact of correspondence, he found spiritual and material reality as part of one single whole. Therefore, he could be called a *monist* (in view of the oneness of things as he saw them) or he could be called a *holist* (because he also saw two kinds of reality making a single whole). Unfortunately, both of these terms are already in use with other meanings. Monism is commonly known among philosophers as one of the sub-groups of materialism. Holism is also used by certain philosophers who maintain that certain collection of things are more than a sum of their parts. However, holism is used by a couple of well-known writers to signify the notion that spirit and matter are equally and similarly objectively real, together forming a whole that is indivisible except in our intellectual conceptions which are based upon incomplete perceptions. Since that is precisely the idea of reality which Swedenborg had, it seems necessary to establish a group called holists, and place Swedenborg squarely in the middle of it. Holism, then, gives us a name for Swedenborg's ontology. When we try to define his epistemology, we need another term—a term consistent with holism but even more particularly related to Swedenborg's experience and distinctive outlook. The location and definition holistic ontology is the necessary preface to this label which is the main subject of this paper: *Empirical Revelation*.

In epistemology, as in ontology, there are broad general groups that include almost everyone. The epistemology of most who hold a materialistic ontology is some form of empiricism—a word which indicates that they answer the question "How do I know?" by referring to experience. By experience, empiricists usually refer to experience of the senses, saying that what they have seen, heard, felt, etc., is what they know, and they don't know anything else. If pressed, most empiricists will admit that they can know—at least know to some degree—by someone else's experience, thus accounting for the accumulation of knowledge through ages and generations. Empiricists have no place, however, for ideas which "just come to me," or inherent knowledge, or knowledge that is revealed.

Idealists, on the other hand, are not much interested in experience as a source of knowledge. Experience is biased, incomplete, limited by the situation of the individual who has it. Certain knowledge, they say, is revealed (if they are religious idealists), intuited or inherent (if they are humanistic idealists), but in any case has its origin outside the fluctuating uncertain world perceived by our physical senses.

Swedenborg, anticipating doubts and objections to what he was about to write in *Arcana Coelestia*, based his own certainty on the fact that "I have seen, I have heard, I have felt." Plainly, this is the statement of an empiricist; knowledge from experience of the senses is self-validating for the man who has had the experience. However, empiricists were among the most surprised and shocked by that statement. What Swedenborg saw, heard and felt was completely outside the realm of material reality, and the experience was completely independent of his physical senses. Beyond this, to the horror of empiricists, Swedenborg maintained with all the self-evident certainty of actual experience, that everything he experienced in the spiritual world was revealed to him by the Lord. This would seem to make him an idealist in his epistemology; but it does not because he denies receiving ready-made ideas, or concepts, or words in his revelation.

In his epistemology, as in his ontology, Swedenborg winds up with a foot firmly planted in each of two opposing camps but his body outside of either. In an attempt to create a category which takes adequate account of all aspects of Swedenborg's claim to have received revealed knowledge through sensible experience in the spiritual world, I coined the term "empirical revelation." Like holism, this term is not self-evidently satisfactory, though the objections to it have a different basis. The term is not easily confused with other usages; rather it contradicts itself. Empiricism and revelation are totally incompatible notions, except in the platitudinous sense that whenever revelation comes to a man, it becomes a part of his experience. Swedenborg meant more than this: experience was the means by which knowledge was revealed to him. The phrase is self-contradictory only so long as we accept the traditional view that experience can only be physical, and revelation can only be spiritual. If we take Swedenborg seriously, however, and erase the boundary between two realities, then it becomes necessary to consider the possibility that the

full dimensions of experience embrace both aspects of the whole of reality. From this perspective, the material world in which we have physical experience is part of God's revelation, if we will see it as such; and the spiritual world, in which revelation is more direct, is an arena of our experience, whether we are conscious of it or not.

For Swedenborg's holistic view of reality, therefore, empirical revelation is the most reasonable basis for certain knowledge, at least it is so for anyone who is conscious of his participation in the spiritual world.

Understanding, even granting, all of this, what difference does it make? Accurate labels—either these, or better ones if they be found are important in serious study, because they mark progress that need not be re-traced, starting points for work toward new clarifications and understandings. More important than labels, however, is an accurate and adequate understanding of the intellectual framework and tools that Swedenborg worked with. Some of his greatest, and most significantly original contributions to the history of thought are short-circuited and lost if they are confused with other, more familiar ways of talking about reality and knowledge.

Also, when we think (as we do at his birthday) of where Swedenborg stands in the history of philosophical and religious thinking, it is important to know what he has in common with what traditions, and in what respects he stands alone. Familiar Swedenborgian theological tenets that God is love,

that the Lord is *Divinum Humanum* (God-Man), that there are discrete degrees of reality, that there is a spiritual sense within the Word, that man is a spirit, that there is a heaven and a hell, and a divine providence over all material affairs: these and other affirmations that may seem self-evident to Swedenborgians, are in the strictest sense incomprehensible to anyone whose world-view (explicit or sub-conscious) does not include what I have described under the labels of Holism and Empirical Revelation. This radical uniqueness of Swedenborg may be cause for wonder, and a certain veiled, vicarious pride among his followers; but it is also a caution to be taken seriously.

The fact that there are not even any commonly-accepted labels for the views of reality and knowledge that were so self-evident to Swedenborg that he didn't even spell them out as doctrines, warns us that we have great intellectual chasms to bridge in communicating our religious beliefs to others. The problems are not necessarily made easier when we attempt to communicate with those who are not familiar with these philosophical categories. Everyone has an ontology and an epistemology of their own, whether they can verbalize it or not; and if both you and the person you are communicating with are unaware of your most basic disagreements, what seem like logical arguments have unexpected outcomes. Here lies an immense job that is scarcely begun in all these years of Swedenborgian scholarship. Contributions to it will be welcomed in the pages of *The Messenger*.

Robert H. Kirven

## THOUGHTS IN TRAFFIC

*Walled from the world in my little box,  
Bars and sheets of steel on every side  
Each opening safety-glassed,  
I push and I twist with my feet and my  
hands,  
Making a place among other boxes,  
But never, never touching one.*

*When I get where I'm going and free of my  
box,  
I won't have to maneuver any more:  
I can touch and be touched by bodies,  
Minds and feelings, too—  
If I haven't forgotten how,  
Pushing and twisting in my little box.*

Robert H. Kirven

## MRS. CHARLES HARVEY DIES

Mrs. Charles Harvey, the former Leslie Carter, wife of the late Rev. Charles W. Harvey, and mother of Professor Dorothea Harvey of Urbana College, died January 5, 1970 in Urbana, Ohio.

## NOTICE TO LEAGUERS

Some Leaguers are not receiving the *League Journal*. Are you? If not, or if there is any error in the way yours is addressed, please send your name and address, or any necessary correction, to the central office, from which the *League Journal* is mailed:

The Swedenborgian Church  
48 Sargent St., Box 66  
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**REV. WILLIAM FREDERIC WUNSCH**  
(1882 – 1969)

The Rev. William F. Wunsch, distinguished scholar, teacher and pastor of the Swedenborgian Church; since his retirement, a resident with his wife (the former Mary Gunn) of West Lebanon, N. Y., died December 19th. Services were conducted by the Rev. Edwin G. Capon at Stephentown, N. Y.

After graduating from the University of Michigan in 1908 with the degrees of LL.B. and A.B., Mr. Wunsch attended the New Church Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was ordained in 1909. He held successive pastorships in Bath, Maine (1909–12), Roxbury, Massachusetts (1912–16), Waltham, Massachusetts (1919–35), Brooklyn Heights, New York (1935–43), Church of the Holy City, Washington, D. C. (1943–58), and as summer preacher at Little Harbor Chapel, Portsmouth, New Hampshire (1927–54). Meanwhile he served at the New Church Theological School as instructor (1909–13), Professor: theology (1914–30), Bible literature and languages (1930–35), Chairman of the Board of Managers (1945–47), lecturer (1950–52). He retired from the active ministry in 1958.

His literary contributions to Swedenborgiana have been considerable. As author: *An Outline of New Church Teaching* (1926); *The World Within the Bible* (1929); *A Practical Philosophy of Life* (1937); *The Panorama of Revelation* (1965); as editor: *New Church Review* (1917–34); *The New Christianity* (1935–45)); as translator of Swedenborg: *Charity* (1931); *Marital Love* (1938); *Divine Providence* (1960); as compiler: *Swedenborg on*

*Marriage* (1929); *Swedenborg on the Bible* (1929); *Marriage, Ideals and Realization* (1929); as collaborator or editor: *The Gist of Swedenborg* (1921); *The Stairway of Life* JK. Smyth, posthumous (1939); as contributor: chapter on the Church of the New Jerusalem in *Religion in the Twentieth Century*—ed. Vergilius Ferm (1948)—reprinted as *Living Schools of Religion* and issued in "New Students Outline Series," paperback, Littlefield Adams & Co., Ames, Iowa (1956); *What is a Swedenborgian?*—for the Washington Daily News series "The Religions of our Day" (1956).

Other activities in the service of the church and publishing bodies include (1943–1958): Trustee of the National Church, Washington, D. C.; Committee on the Religious Life in the Nation's capital; Director of Washington Federation of Churches; Representative for the General Convention of the New Jerusalem on the American Committee for the World Council of Churches until organized in the Hague in 1914; President of the Young People's League (1906–1908); Editor of its *Journal* (1911–13); President of the Sunday School Association (1912–13); Member of General Council of the Convention (1921–24); Director of Swedenborg Publishing Association, New Church Board of Publication (1920–1969), and Swedenborg Foundation (1954–1969).

At the end of his life, Mr. Wunsch was engaged in the preparation of a volume to replace and broaden the scope of the well-known *Dictionary of Correspondences*, which is not expected to be reprinted in its original form.



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JANUARY 1970

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