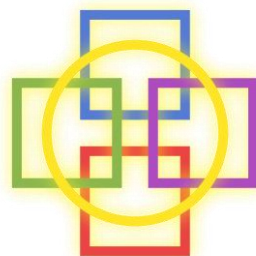




SERMON ARCHIVE 2011

Swedenborgian Community Online



The First Day

January 2, 2011

READINGS

From Scripture

Genesis 1 (New International Version)

Genesis 1

The Beginning

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Now the earth was [a] formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

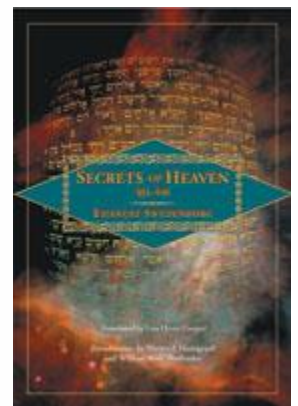
3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

From Swedenborg

"The beginning" includes the first period of regeneration too, as that is when people are being born anew and receiving life. Because of this, regeneration itself is called our new creation. ...

Before regeneration a person is called the void, empty earth, and also soil in which no seed of goodness or truth has been planted. Void refers to an absence of goodness and empty to an absence of truth. The result is darkness, in which a person is oblivious to or ignorant of anything having to do with faith in the Lord and consequently with a spiritual or heavenly life. ...

Heavenly Secrets, parts of #16-17. NCE



The First Day

January 1st is the first day of the New Year. We think of a "first day" as the start of something new; a new school year, a new job. The Bible begins with God's first day of creation; the first day of all that God has brought into existence. To Swedenborg, this story has powerful meanings; not just about the beginning of creation, but about the start of each person's spiritual journey.

The first day of creation was when God created light, and separated it from darkness.

Swedenborg says that there are deeper, spiritual truths in the Bible than are expressed in the story itself. The early verses of Genesis are about opening our inner, spiritual eyes to God's light.

That first day is described this way in *Heavenly Secrets*:

Before regeneration a person is called the void, empty earth, and also soil in which no seed of goodness or truth has been



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

planted... Void refers to an absence of goodness and empty to an absence of truth. The result is darkness, in which a person is oblivious to or ignorant of anything having to do with faith in the Lord and consequently with a spiritual or heavenly life. ...
Heavenly Secrets, parts of #16-17. NCE

The new "Reader's Guide" to Heavenly Secrets notes that the stage just prior to rebirth [of void and empty earth] can be one of devastation; a stage called "the dark night of soul" by St. John of the Cross, and others in Christian mystical history. [Footnote #34 on page 601.]

Before we can learn what is true and be affected by what is good, the things that stand in the way and resist have to be put aside. The old self must die before the new self can be conceived. [S.H. #18]

We often think of the end of a year as a chance to let go of old parts of our selves; and the New Year as a chance to claim new ones. Often, we make resolutions for the New Year to change our behaviors in some way: to lose weight, to exercise more, eat better, budget money, etc. It is a hard way to start a new year, and most of us forget about the resolutions within a few weeks.

For Swedenborg, the way to begin a spiritual journey is not so much about what we do, but who we are.

In his commentary on Gen 1:3 [*and God said let there be light*], he wrote:

The first step is taken when we begin to realize that goodness and truth are something transcendent. [SH, 20]

If you focus just on external matters – of the earth and of the ego – then what you consider “good” is only a selfish idea based on your own need. *We need to know, too, that the Lord is Goodness itself, or life, and truth itself, or the light, and consequently that nothing good or true exists that does not come from him.*

We start the journey by letting in the light – of God.



An example comes from the life of Helen Keller, whose book *Light in My Darkness* tells of her spiritual journey that was guided by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

As a teen-ager, Helen came to have many questions about spirituality. It so happened that a very prominent Swedenborgian wandered into her life about that time. He was John Hitz. He worked with Alexander Graham Bell in an organization to provide material about deafness. When Helen took her questions to him, he provided her with a Braille volume of Swedenborg's writing.

Reading it in Braille, she had a spiritual awakening similar to the one she had had years earlier with her teacher, Anne Sullivan when she realized at the water pump that letters had meaning.

I do not know whether I adopted the faith, or the faith adopted me. I can only say that the heart of the young girl sitting with a big book of raised letters on her lap in the sublime sunshine was thrilled by a radiant presence and inexpressibly endearing voice ... the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg have been my light and a staff in my hand, and by his vision splendid I am attended on my way.

Her spiritual comprehension was profound. When we talk about God's light in our darkness, most of us are using the term metaphorically, to refer a spiritual or emotional state. Most of us see physical light with

our eyes, but encounter many periods of spiritual darkness.

In our opening song, Johnny Cash sang:

*Just like a blind man I wandered astray
Straight is the gate and narrow the way
then like the blind man that got back his sight
Praise the Lord I saw the light.*

*I saw the light I saw the light
No more darkness no more night
now I'm so happy no sorrow in sight
Praise the Lord I saw the light.*



He wasn't singing about a physical light, but rather comparing God's light that is beyond the physical eyes.

For Helen, her darkness was only to the physical world. Her spiritual eyes within saw God, giving her far clearer sight than those of us who can see through physical eyes.

In order to see God, we need spiritual eyes; not physical ones. We need to hear God whispering in our heart; we don't need physical ears for that.

Helen wrote:

"I cannot see the stars scattered in the heavens; but other stars just as bright shine in my soul. Soul is very real and important to me."

When we despair of God's light guiding us through darkness, let's remember that God's light is inside. We may not see the divine light with our physical eyes. But we can see clearly with our spiritual eyes. So many of us have "spiritual disabilities" and are fortunate to have the leadership of one with such perfect spiritual sight as Helen Keller.

As we begin a new year in our lives, let's remember how God's creation began: with light. Let's the light of God's love shine in your heart every day.

Join in our closing song, "I Can See Clearly Now." As you sing, focus on "seeing" with spiritual eyes, as Helen Keller taught us:

*I can see clearly now, the rain is gone,
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)
Sun-Shiny day.*

*Here is the rainbow I've been prayin for
it's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)
Sun-Shiny day.*



Why, God?

January 9, 2011

READINGS

From Scripture

Job 11

Zophar

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite replied:

2 "Are all these words to go unanswered?
Is this talker to be vindicated?

3 Will your idle talk reduce men to silence?
Will no one rebuke you when you mock?

4 You say to God, 'My beliefs are flawless
and I am pure in your sight.'

5 Oh, how I wish that God would speak,
that he would open his lips against you

6 and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom,
for true wisdom has two sides.
Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

7 "Can you fathom the mysteries of God?
Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?

8 They are higher than the heavens—what can you do?
They are deeper than the depths of the grave [a] —what can you know?

9 Their measure is longer than the earth
and wider than the sea.

10 "If he comes along and confines you in prison
and convenes a court, who can oppose him?

11 Surely he recognizes deceitful men;
and when he sees evil, does he not take note?

12 But a witless man can no more become wise
than a wild donkey's colt can be born a man. [b]

13 "Yet if you devote your heart to him
and stretch out your hands to him,

14 if you put away the sin that is in your hand
and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,

15 then you will lift up your face without shame;
you will stand firm and without fear.

From Swedenborg



478. This spiritual equilibrium, which is freedom of choice, may be illustrated by various forms of natural equilibrium. It is like the equilibrium of a man bound about his body or at his arms between two men of equal strength, one of whom draws the man between them to the right, and the other to the left, so that the man in the middle can freely turn this way or that as if unrestrained by any force; and if he turns toward the right he draws the man on his left forcibly toward him, even bringing him to the ground. It would be the same with any unresisting person, even if bound between three men on his right, and the same number on his left, of equal power; also if bound between camels or horses.

[2] Spiritual equilibrium, which is freedom of choice, may be compared to a balance, in each scale of which equal weights are placed; but if a slight weight is then added to either scale, the tongue of the scale begins to vibrate. It is similar with a pole or large beam balanced on its support. Each and all things within man, as the heart, the lungs, the stomach, the liver, the pancreas, the spleen, the intestines, and the rest, are in such a state of equilibrium; and for this reason each is able to discharge its functions in perfect quiet. It is the same with all the muscles; if they were without such equilibrium all action and reaction would cease, and man would no longer act as a man. Since, then, all things of the body are in such equilibrium, so are all things of the brain, and consequently all things of the mind therein, which relate to the will and understanding.

[3] There is a freedom also belonging to beasts, birds, fishes and insects; but these are impelled by their bodily senses, prompted by appetite and pleasure. Man would not be unlike these if his freedom to do were equal to his freedom to think. He, too, would then be impelled by his bodily senses, prompted by lust and pleasure. It is otherwise with one who heartily accepts the spiritual things of the church, and by means of them restrains his freedom of choice. Such a man is led by the Lord away from lusts and evil pleasures and his connate avidity for them, and acquires an affection for what is good, and turns away from evil. He is then transferred by the Lord nearer to the east, and at the same time to the south of the spiritual world, and is introduced into heavenly freedom, which is freedom indeed.

TCR 478

Why, God?

How could You allow the kind of tragedy that happened in Tucson, Arizona, on Saturday, Jan. 8?

It was a beautiful Saturday morning in Tucson, and the Congressional representative, Gabrielle Giffords, was holding a "Congress on Your Corner" discussion for her constituents. As she had done many times before, she and her staff came to a parking lot of a grocery store to speak with and listen to the people she served. It was a few minutes after 10:00 A.M., and she was just getting started. About 25 people had gathered.

Suddenly, shots rang out. A man with a semi-automatic shot the congress woman in the head, and shot into the crowd; killing 6 people and wounding 12 others. Rep. Giffords was taken to a hospital for immediate surgery. Others were taken to various hospitals in the area. We await word on Sunday morning about their conditions.

How does Swedenborg help us make sense out of senseless tragedy such as this?

Bob Kirven writes about Swedenborg's theology:

"Evil includes everything that flows from the hells, or comes about under hellish influences.

Murder is evil, but the desire for murder; the intention to commit murder ... is sin.

So Swedenborg would see the shooting of 18 people in a parking lot as more than evil; it was intentional sin.

Kirven goes on to say:

Swedenborg sees the basic, minimal freedom of choice as absolute, irreducible, and unbridgeable. [Kirven, A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology, p. 9]

I find George Dole's book especially helpful: *Freedom & Evil: a Pilgrim's Guide to Hell*.

... The basic Swedenborgian answer to the theodicy problem – the reconciliation between the existence of hell and goodness and omnipotence of God – is simply that no one is in hell who does not want to be there. I can't simply be 'sent' there; I have to buy the ticket and get on the train myself. If at any time I actually wanted to get off, I could. The gates of hell are not to keep people in, but to keep them out. [p. 69]

God supports our free will. We are guided and encouraged and taught as much as we want. But the choice must be ours. To give everyone free choice means that a lot of really selfish and violent decisions get made on the earth.

Swedenborg talked about the New Jerusalem, where we would create a different kind of life on earth for everyone -- a world of justice and love. We then will have created heaven on earth! The congresswoman was working hard to create a better life on earth for everyone, but the shooter's free will intervened.

Heaven and hell are not just states awaiting us after death. We face them every moment of life on earth.

Swedenborg describes us as being held, in the here and now, between calls to heaven and calls to hell, subject to pressures or, perhaps better, attractions, from both sides. ... Freedom in the here and now is essentially a freedom to choose what kind of person we want to be. P. 172 [reference to tcr 478:2]

We ask God: "How could you allow this tragedy?"

God may respond, "How do YOU allow it? How do you allow life on earth to be so violent? You must keep working towards the New Jerusalem. We together must keep working every moment to bring the power of Love to prevail over evil and sin."

The actions of the shooter can only be motivated by hellish impulses. However, God can be seen at work in the many people who responded to the tragedy: the men who tackled the gunman to end his shooting; the intern who propped up the congresswoman so she would not choke in her blood, the emergency medical people who arrived at the scene, and the many medical people at the hospital who have worked to save so many lives.

It is also seen in all of us, as we send prayers for healing and for Love to prevail.

Let us pray:

Dear God:

Please be with all of the victims and their families of this senseless and sinful shooting. Help all of us to support them with love. Help all of us to work every moment of every day to make this world into the New Jerusalem, where Your Love guides all of our actions. Amen.

Shooter, Survivors & Swedenborg

January 23, 2011

READINGS

From Scripture

From the Bible

NIV

Matthew 4

Jesus Heals the Sick

23Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. 25Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,[f] Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

From Swedenborg

By the human mind are meant its two faculties, which are called the understanding and the will. The understanding is the receptacle of the light of heaven, which in its essence is wisdom, and the will is the receptacle of the heat of heaven, which in its essence is love, as was shown above. These two, wisdom and love, proceed from the Lord, as a sun, and flow into heaven universally and particularly, whence the angels have wisdom and love; and they also flow into this world universally and particularly, whence men have wisdom and love. [Soul-Body, 14, XII]

MESSAGE

The media has been saturated with discussions of mental illness, brain injury, grief. We had a message about this topic and free will [two weeks ago](#). We had a discussion of mental illness and Swedenborg in [Thursday's chat](#).

How can God support those who lost loved ones, support those who were injured – and also support the shooter?

What is there in Swedenborg that can help us see God at work in all of these lives?

The Shooter

How can we make sense out of the evil that is expressed by the senseless shootings of innocent people?

Swedenborg gives us a way to understand why God allows evil. He wrote this in *Divine Providence*:

234. Laws of Permission Are Also Laws of Divine Providence

There are no "laws of permission" that are simply that, or that are separate from the laws of divine providence. They are the same thing; so saying that God allows something to happen does not mean that he wants it to happen but that he cannot prevent it because of his goal, which is our salvation. Whatever happens for the sake of this goal, our salvation, is in accord with the laws of divine providence, since as already noted [183, 211], divine providence is always moving away from and contrary to our own intentions. It is constantly focused on its goal; so at every moment of its work, at every single step of its course, when it notices that we are straying from that goal it leads and turns and adapts us in accord with its laws, leading us away from evil and toward good. We will see shortly that this cannot be accomplished without allowing bad things to happen.



Bruce Henderson wrote a book called, "Why Does God Let It Happen?" Here he talks about his book:



INTRODUCTION xiii

His teachings about divine providence can do the same for all our nagging questions about why events unfold the way they do. Swedenborg explains that there are absolute spiritual laws that govern God's creation. These "laws of providence" express God's love and guidance in our lives, and his presence never ceases—even when it may seem that he has turned his back or become distant. God can never go against his own laws, which are there to protect our eternal lives, not just our lives on earth.

Many of these teachings will be related to specific examples throughout this book, but four concepts are fundamental:

- ❖ God is all-powerful and in total control. He never abandons us. But he does allow things that are contrary to his will, for the sake of our freedom, because our freedom is fundamental to his love.
- ❖ What God allows but does not will is called "permission" by Swedenborg. Understanding this concept helps to answer the question, "Why?"
- ❖ If the tragedy that happens in our lives is the permission, then providence is what happens afterward. It is the way God's love heals and it always leads to good.
- ❖ What we see in this natural or material world is limited by space and time. It's temporal. God sees everything in a spiritual context—not only how our lives are affected here and now, but the impact and repercussions to eternity.

God's providence is governed by fixed spiritual laws. It is not arbitrary, but clear and consistent within a transcendent spiritual context. One of these laws, according to Swedenborg,



In Thursday's chat, we discussed this quotation from Swedenborgian scholar Dr. Robert Kirven:

Swedenborg sees the basic, minimal freedom of choice as absolute, irreducible, and unbridgeable. It is an essential quality of human nature. No one who is fully human [an insane person, for example, might be less than fully human in this sense] is ever denied that freedom. No one who is fully human can ever escape the responsibility which freedom of choice implies. ... insanity, infancy, ignorance [in some limited cases] or anything that abridges rationality, does abridge freedom of choice at the same time and to the same extent – but that is also an abridgement of full human capabilities.

[Robert Kirven, *A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology*, p. 9 – 10]

Yes, one can only exercise their free will when the mind is clear and rational. One of our chat participants provided this quote from Swedenborg:

Now, since the Lord wills that a man be reformed and regenerated in order that eternal life or the life of heaven may be his, and none can be reformed or regenerated unless good is appropriated to his will and truth to his understanding as if they were his, and only that can be appropriated which is done in freedom of the will and in accord with the reason of the understanding, no one is reformed in states of no freedom or rationality. There are many such states, but they may be summarized as states of fear, misfortune, mental illness, physical disease, ignorance, and intellectual blindness. Something will be said of each. Divine Providence #138

Another quote that was provided, and that we discussed quite a bit was:

No one is reformed in a state of mental illness because such illness takes away rationality and thus the liberty of acting in accord with reason. The whole mind is sick and not sane; the sane mind is rational, but not a sick one. Such disorders are melancholy, spurious or a false conscience, fantasies of different kinds, mental grief over misfortune, anxiety and anguish of the mind over a bodily defect. Divine Providence #141.

One participant commented: *What an amazing list: states of fear, misfortune, mental illness, physical disease, ignorance, and intellectual blindness, melancholy, spurious or false conscience, fantasies, mental grief, anxiety, anguish of mind over bodily defect.*

Even if one makes a clear choice to do an evil act, salvation is available. For Swedenborg, salvation was not about what one believes, but rather how one lives one life. The road to salvation is "regeneration," and the heart of regeneration is "uses" -- or living a useful life.

The Survivors

THE CHILD

Many people were deeply touched by the death of the nine-year-old girl who had been born on 9-11, and who had gone to hear her congressional representative on a Saturday morning. Does Swedenborg have anything reassuring to offer her friends and family? Swedenborg wrote a lot about the heavenly life after death. He said that angels were especially attentive to children who passed over. He wrote this in *Heaven & Hell*:

May it be known, therefore, that every child who dies, no matter where he or she was born, within the church or outside it, of devout or irreverent parents, is accepted by the Lord after death, brought up in heaven, taught according to the divine design and filled with affections for what is good and through them with direct knowledge of the truth; and then, being continually perfected in intelligence and wisdom, all such individuals are led into heaven and become angels. Anyone who thinks rationally can realize that no one is born for hell-everyone is born for heaven. We

ourselves are to blame if we arrive in hell, but children are not yet liable for any blame.
329

THE CONGRESSWOMAN

Congressional representative Gabrielle Giffords survived a bullet through the left side of her brain. Doctors say that she is doing extremely well, although does have a lot rehabilitation ahead of her.

We don't know exactly what Rep. Giffords is experiencing. However, we do know what Jill Bolte Taylor experienced when she had a stroke. She was a trained neuro researcher who on December 10, 1996, had a devastating stroke on the left side of her brain. She observed and remembered every detail, and later described the morning of the stroke in her book, *A Stroke of Insight*:

My entire self-consciousness shifted as I no longer perceived myself as a single, a solid, an entity with boundaries that separated me from the entities around me. I understood that at the most elementary level I am a fluid. ...I was no longer isolated and alone. My soul was as big as the universe and frolicked with glee in a boundless sea. [p. 69].

Jill believed that because her left brain functions were shut down, her right brain took over, leaving her in a world of ecstasy and bliss.

My stroke of insight is that at the core of my right hemisphere is a character that is directly connected to my feeling of deep inner peace. It is completely committed to the expression of peace, love, joy, and compassion in the world.

Jill, in the end, is with Swedenborg in saying that we have to use both sides of our brain. Our culture teaches us to depend primarily on our left hemisphere to perceive, understand, and make decisions about our lives. By opening more awareness in the right side of our brains, many of us can achieve deeper balance than is common in our culture.

Swedenborg wrote this about the brain:

4054 The brain, like heaven, belongs to the realm of ends which are uses, for whatever flows in from the Lord is an end looking towards the salvation of the human race. A.C.

Jill writes:

This stroke of insight has given me the priceless gift of knowing that deep inner peace is just a thought/feeling away. ... It means that you are capable of tapping into a blissful state of mind amidst the normal chaos of a hectic life'. p. 159

What Jill discovered is the wisdom of the ages. Like Swedenborg, she began adult life as a scientist, and then through experiences beyond her control, came to realize that the rational was only one part of us, and it has to be integrated with love.

God is that force which is always with us, no matter what happens to us. God is that force that helps us transform the worst of life's experiences into opportunities to change ourselves and our world.

Swedenborg

Dr. Louis Cozolino, a psychologist who studies the brain, says that our brains are designed to be social; not isolated. So the way to stay mentally healthy and to improve mental illness is to be in loving relationships. That is how we create community for the world of justice that Swedenborg calls the *New Jerusalem*. It is all about being in loving relationship with each other. We just haven't known quite how powerful that is in each of our lives.

This is what Swedenborg tells us about healing. We need to heal as a society, by coming to understand

mental illness and to treat it compassionately, like we treat physical illness.

Ultimately, the healing journey for all of us is through our loving actions and caring relationships

Central to Swedenborg is that we can experience the Divine through our relationships with each other as long as we can relate out of love rather than fear.

To Swedenborg, faith could not exist apart from the good deeds we do for others:

1. There cannot exist a grain of spiritual faith apart from charity, since charity is the life, soul, and essence of faith; 2. Such as the charity is, such is the faith; and the faith that precedes charity is a faith of cognitions, which is historical faith, in itself a knowing. [Charity, #198]

So, what can we take from Swedenborg in times of great tragedy-- personally or in our society? When we suffer, God suffers with us. Evil is not God's will, but freedom of choice is God's will, since that is the only way we can grow into union with the Divine. In times of tragedy, it does not help to blame God for causing it. But it does help to support others in their suffering. It helps to reach out for others in our own pain. We were created to be social beings, and our brains are designed to be healthiest in relationships with others.

Our conversation in Thursday's chat included many ways to bring more love into our relationships: to support social change in understanding and caring for people with mental illness, to provide healing for those who do evil actions -- whether or not they were freely chosen. It is especially important for us to reach out to the victims of tragedy and walk with them through their healing journey. When we go through our own times of despair, reaching out to others is often the best way to connect with God. God lives not just inside of each of us, but in the loving relationships amongst all of us. When we feel estranged from God, we can reach out for friendship. Through our friendships, we can experience God.

Spiritual Insanity

January 30, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Psalms 91 (New International Version)

1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. [a]

2 I will say [b] of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."

3 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.

4 He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

5 You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,

6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

8 You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

9 If you make the Most High your dwelling—
even the LORD, who is my refuge—

10 then no harm will befall you,
no disaster will come near your tent.

11 For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;

12 they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

13 You will tread upon the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

14 "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.



15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him
and show him my salvation."

Footnotes:

Psalm 91:1 Hebrew Shaddai

Psalm 91:2 Or He says

From Swedenborg:

But such are not intelligent but insane in spiritual things, because they do not will good but evil, consequently they are averse to knowing and understanding truths, for truths favor good and oppose evil. From all this it is clear that the first step in the new birth is a reception of truths by the understanding, and the second is the will to act in accordance with truths, and finally to practice them. No one, however, can be said to be reformed by mere knowledges of truth; for man is able to acquire these and to talk about, teach, and preach them through his ability to elevate his understanding, above the love of his will. But he is a reformed man who has an affection for truth for the sake of truth; for this affection conjoins itself with the will, and if it goes on it conjoins the will to the understanding, and then regeneration begins. But how regeneration afterward advances and is perfected, will be told in what follows.

True Christian Religion, #589

MESSAGE

Spiritual Insanity

Grant Schnarr, a New Church minister, writes in his book, *Spiritual Recovery*:

Spiritual insanity is knowing what is right, is hearing what is right, but doing the opposite anyway. In its purest interpretation, spiritual insanity is an aversion to or rejection of the truth. It is freely choosing to believe and follow something false over what is true. [p. 18].

We've considered the situation of mental insanity that can keep one from freely choosing their actions. In the situation of spiritual insanity, one is fully aware of the truth, but still chooses false and/or evil.

Schnarr goes on to say: *Simply put, if truth is reality and we are adverse to reality, then we are spiritually insane.*

The 2nd step of AA is: *Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

A basic truth that keeps us spiritually sane is that **we are children of God.**

Author Megan Don writes: *We are constantly being given opportunities to re-awaken; that is to remember who we are – divine children of God. Teresa [of Avila] reminds us that this awakening occurs throughout our lifetimes and is not a once or twice only opportunity; rather, it occurs every day in our lives.*

Megan Don, *Falling Into the Arms of God: Meditations with Teresa of Avila_* page 17.

What a profound concept – that we have opportunities to re-awaken spiritually every day.

In our linear society, we like to see clear steps taking us ever upwards. Then we can look behind, to see



who has not yet reached our level. We can look ahead to see who has made it farther.

Teresa of Avila suggests that God may not work that way. One of the great classics of spiritual literature is Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*, where she shows how God leads us through seven rooms of a mansion until we reach complete union with the Divine. But she warns of the danger of being confident that God take us through the rooms in succession.

Megan Don says:

Believing herself incapable of meditation after many attempts, Teresa [temporarily] gave up the practice. She warned against such nonsense and called for perseverance, saying that we need to release any expectation of what we think should happen and rely on God to guide us. There are many rooms in the castle, she reminded us, and we may be taken to any of these rooms at any time –it's not up to us to decide where we need to go. Our meditations and prayers can take us into places of deep peace, or into longing or pain; unbidden memories may surface, or feelings of lightness and grace may pervade our soul. As we journey toward the center of our being, may we be open to visiting all the rooms of our castle. [p. 45 of Don's book]

Making decisions from one's human ego can lead to spiritual insanity. Trusting in God's Divine Love and Wisdom leads to spiritual sanity.

The movie, [Regarding Henry](#), tells the story of a man growing out of spiritual insanity into spiritual sanity. Henry was a powerful attorney who made a great deal of money. Yet he had little regard for ethics, or for relationships with others. He got shot in the head in a robbery, when he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Awakening from a coma, he had to learn again the basics of life – how to walk and to talk. In the process, he developed very different values about people and human relationships. He was no longer powerful and well-to-do. Yet, he was a loving human being who valued every moment of his life. He realized that he had finally found spiritual sanity.

Awakening to the Divine also means awakening to our true selves, and seeking for our true nature that often lies under the veneer of a social mask.

Here is a powerful poem by the Sufi, [Rumi](#).

*For years, copying other people, I tried to know myself.
From within, I couldn't decide what to do.
Unable to see, I heard my name being called.
Then I walked outside.*

*The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.
The desire to go back to sleep can be intense.*

In this translation, Rumi sounds like an adult child of an alcoholic, or other dysfunctional upbringing. One can end up trying to copy others rather than finding one's true self. It is easy to just take your identity from what you hear other people saying about you. You have to wake up, hear your name, and walk outside to find out who you are in God's eyes.

You can only find spiritual sanity when you open your heart to all of God's truth; including God's freely flowing Love and Wisdom.

Belief vs. Faith

February 6, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Mt. 7: 13-29

The Narrow and Wide Gates

13"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

A Tree and Its Fruit

15"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

21"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

The Wise and Foolish Builders

24"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

28When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

From Swedenborg:

All this makes it clear that people who have love also have faith and consequently heavenly life. The same cannot be said of those who claim to have faith but do not lead a loving life.

A life of faith without love is like sunlight without warmth. -- the type of light that occurs in winter, when nothing grows, and everything droops and dies. Faith arising out of love, on the contrary, is like light from the sun in the spring, when everything grows and flourishes.

Heavenly Secrets, #34



Message Belief vs. Faith

The Experience of an Alcoholic

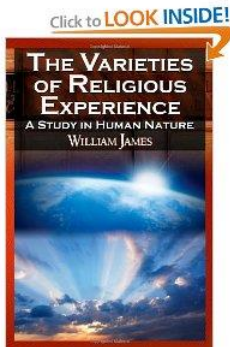
The alcoholic man had tried everything he could think of to stop drinking, but nothing had worked. One night, quite drunk, he wandered into the Calvary Mission, where a preacher invited people to give their souls to Jesus. The man jumped up and joined others at the railing.

Almost immediately, he felt his desire to drink lifting from him. He was able to walk home passing many bars, without stopping to drink. When he got home, he excitedly told his wife that he knew he had finally stopped drinking! His new-found faith would be enough.

After his wife left for work the next morning, he realized he needed a few drinks to get through the day. He kept drinking for several days, and then staggered to the hospital where he had dried out before. He was very discouraged; even suicidal.

A good friend, and fellow alcoholic, visited him and brought him a copy of William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

William James was the son of Henry James, who had become an avid convert to Swedenborg as a young man, and raised his children Swedenborgian. William had issues with his father, and wouldn't claim his religion. However, his work as a psychologist focused on mystical experience, and seemed quite Swedenborgian in its viewpoint.



Bill wasn't interested in reading, so his friend, Ebby left the book with him. That night Bill – Bill Wilson, our alcoholic – reached the absolute bottom of despair, and shouted out, *“If there be a God, let him show himself.”*

“Suddenly,” he later wrote, *“my room blazed with an indescribable white light. I was seized with an ecstasy beyond description. Every joy I had known was weak by comparison. Then, seen in the mind's eye, there was a mountain. I stood on its summit, where a great wind blew. A wind, not of air, but of spirit. In great, clean strength, it blew right through me. Then came the blazing thought, ‘you are a free man.’”*

And Bill Wilson was, in fact, a free man at that moment. He never again had another drink, and was a primary inspiration for the founding of A.A.

We now might say that Bill had just experienced the first two steps of A.A.. He had admitted his powerlessness, and he came to believe in a power greater than himself.

But how had that happened? And why didn't it happen before, such as when he gave his soul to Jesus at the mission a few days earlier?

Swedenborg on Faith

Perhaps the answer lies in what Swedenborg wrote about faith.

To Swedenborg, faith had to be part of love, to be in the heart; not just in the mind. Many people have a “faith” that is theirs because they were raised with it. They never question it, and they call it their faith. But, they haven’t experienced it with their heart; they have only absorbed it as words in the mind.

When Bill saw the light in his room, he was having a spiritual experience. It was not something he thought he ought to believe. It was his own true belief from the experience of his heart that night. And it changed his life forever.

How is it that Bill, Ebby, and others came to understand “belief” in that way?

We cannot know for sure, but it does seem that Swedenborg’s writings had an indirect influence on early A.A.



Carl Jung and A.A.

One of the earliest influences on the first members was Carl Jung.

In 1931, Roland H. discouraged by his inability to stop drinking, went to learn from Carl Jung in Zurich. He had a year of successful treatment, but as soon as he left, he drank again. He returned to Jung for treatment, but Jung told him that further treatment would be useless. He needed to have a true spiritual awakening, and he suggested a religious group. Roland became involved in the Oxford Group, out of which came most of the early AA members.

Roland passed the good news about a spiritual awakening on to his friend and fellow alcoholic, Ebby. Ebby also came to the Oxford Group, and learned there of a popular book many members were reading: *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James. It was the book he brought to Bill during his stay in his hospital.



Years Later, Bill Wilson wrote to Carl Jung:

“This concept [of spiritual experience] proved to be the foundation of such success as Alcoholics Anonymous has since achieved. This has made conversion experience ... available on almost a wholesale basis.” In his closing, Bill wrote: “...as you will now clearly see, this astonishing chain of events actually started long ago in your consulting room, and it was directly founded upon your own humility and deep perception.”

Carl Jung had read Swedenborg’s work during medical school, and had a spiritual psychology similar to Swedenborg’s.

Our Own Experiences

As I grew up, I was given a faith tradition by my family and my church. It was our tradition, and I was to have “faith” that it was true. To even question its validity was to lack faith.

By college years, I had wandered away from that tradition, as it had nothing to attract me. However, when I learned to meditate, I came to have my own experience of a peace and love that had to be Divine.

This is what Swedenborg calls upon all of us to do. We need to open our hearts to Love, and to live our spirituality in our daily lives. We come to know God for ourselves. This “knowing” is not because someone

tells us it is so. It is because we open our hearts and live our daily lives with Love.

A personal knowing of God is not always through a mystical experience – such as James wrote about and Bill experienced – it could be through opening our hearts to love.

Swedenborg talks about experience that comes into ones heart. It changes who you are; not the words that you utter. *A life of faith without love is like sunlite without warmth.*

That may be the deeper meaning to “came to believe.” Not in the sense of learning a creed; but in the William James sense of having a real encounter with the Divine.

Jung was right that it took such an encounter to bring an alcoholic to recovery.

The same is true for each of us everyday of our lives. God is not expecting us to come to accept some belief system in our minds; but an experience of the Divine in our hearts.

As Swedenborgians, we honor and respect the spiritual encounters we all have in our lives.

What are the experiences in your life that have formed your beliefs?



The Love of Your Life

February 13, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Psalm 139 (New International Version, ©2010)

Psalm 139

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

1 You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
17 How precious to me are your thoughts,[a] God!



How vast is the sum of them!
18 Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

19 If only you, God, would slay the wicked!
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!
20 They speak of you with evil intent;
your adversaries misuse your name.
21 Do I not hate those who hate you, LORD,
and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?
22 I have nothing but hatred for them;
I count them my enemies.
23 Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Footnotes:

1. Psalm 139:17 Or How amazing are your thoughts concerning me

From Swedenborg:

Love is our life. For most people, the existence of love is a given, but the nature of love is a mystery.
[DLW, 1, NCE]

Heavenly love is for the Lord, and spiritual love for our neighbor. Heavenly love is a love for what is good, while spiritual love is a love for what is true. When we are moved by heavenly love, we do our acts of service out of love for what is good; while when we are moved by spiritual love, we do them out of love for what is true. [DLW, 427, NCE]

Message *The Love of Your Life*

If asked to identify the “love of your life,” what would you reply? Most of us would name a very special person or persons: a beloved partner, a parent, a child. Some would name a quality or activity, such as “music” or “painting.”

For Swedenborg, Love IS our life. *Our love is our very life itself.* [TCR, 399, NCE]

In footnote 36 of the New Century Edition of *Divine Love and Wisdom*, the editors write: *divine love and wisdom are not emanations **from** God that are somehow separate from God's nature. Instead divine love and wisdom are emanations **of** God's nature: God's real presence throughout the cosmos.*

As Swedenborg continues in TCR #399: *The nature of our love determines the nature of our life and in fact our entire nature as a human being. Our dominant or leading love, however, is the love that constitutes us.*

Wilson Van Dusen talks about our dominant love in his book, Returning to the Source: Your life's love is your own personal built-in path to enlightenment. [p. 93].

He puts it succinctly when he says: *the love of the life realizes itself in useful deeds. Uses are heaven*

come to earth; love realizing itself. [p. 93]

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Golde and Tevye wrestle with the concept of love:

(Tevye) Golde, do you love me?

(Golde)
Do I what?

(Tevye)
Do you love me?

(Golde)
Do I love you?
With our daughters getting married
And this trouble in the town
You're upset, you're worn out
Go inside, go lie down!
Maybe it's indigestion

(Tevye)
"Golde I'm asking you a question..."

Do you love me?

(Golde)
You're a fool

(Tevye)
"I know..."

But do you love me?

(Golde)
Do I love you?
For twenty-five years I've washed your clothes
Cooked your meals, cleaned your house
Given you children, milked the cow
After twenty-five years, why talk about love right now?

(Tevye)
Golde, The first time I met you
Was on our wedding day
I was scared

(Golde)
I was shy

(Tevye)
I was nervous

(Golde)



So was I

(Tevye)

But my father and my mother
Said we'd learn to love each other
And now I'm asking, Golde
Do you love me?

(Golde)

I'm your wife

(Tevye)

"I know..."

But do you love me?

(Golde)

Do I love him?

For twenty-five years I've lived with him
Fought him, starved with him
Twenty-five years my bed is his
If that's not love, what is?

(Tevye)

Then you love me?

(Golde)

I suppose I do

(Tevye)

And I suppose I love you too

(Both)

It doesn't change a thing
But even so
After twenty-five years
It's nice to know

Here is the essence of what Golde has said:

*For twenty-five years I've washed your clothes
Cooked your meals, cleaned your house
Given you children, milked the cow
After twenty-five years, why talk about love right now?*

...

Do I love him?

*For twenty-five years I've lived with him
Fought him, starved with him
Twenty-five years my bed is his
If that's not love, what is?*

Tevye and Golde grew up in a culture that understood "love" to be about how people live together. They were not expected to have a feeling of "being in love" when they got married. However, through the years



Swedenborgian
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Love, Spirit, Life

of living together and working towards common goals, they experienced love. For them, it was the daily actions of being together that were love. They might notice a feeling of “love” after years of performing caring deeds.

For Swedenborg, love is both something we feel and something we do. Love is the essence of God flowing into us; hence we are recipients of it. Love is also which we do that expresses this essence. If I do good things because I know I should, then I am acting out of “wisdom.” But if I do good things because it is my essence to do good things, then I am acting out of love. I am acting out of that which is Divine.

What is the love of your life? Swedenborg says that our very life is that which we love. We can recognize love in each other by the loving actions we do for others because we want to do them. Sometimes our actions start out as being what we know we should do – hence wisdom. But eventually they may become actions we do because we want to; because to do so expresses the essence of who we are.

What things do you do that help you feel closer to the Divine? What actions give you pleasure deep down inside because you are making someone else happy? These things are the love/s of your life.

This week’s prayer:

Oh, Lord, thank you for the beauty of this day whatever the weather is outside. Thank you for my life. With you, Lord, as my constant companion, I know that no matter what the appearances, that life is full of good and wonderful possibilities ahead. Keep me focused on this day only and how I can get closer to You in my daily life. When sorrow comes, or other losses in my life, let me be focused on the love and comfort that You have for me, cuddled in Your arms, let me be aware that even the worst of times pass in a blink of an eye. Thank you, loving Lord, thank you. Amen.

[Rev. Judith Vandergrift]



The Coat and Regeneration

February 20, 2011

READINGS

FROM THE BIBLE

Joseph Sold by His Brothers

12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, 13 and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them."

"Very well," he replied.

14 So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, 15 a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

16 He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

17 "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.' " So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. 18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. 20 "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. 22 "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing— 24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

25 As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

28 So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels [b] of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

29 When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. 30 He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"

31 Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe."

33 He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has

surely been torn to pieces."

34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. 35 All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I go down to the grave [c] to my son." So his father wept for him.

36 Meanwhile, the Midianites [d] sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

Footnotes:

Genesis 37:3 The meaning of the Hebrew for richly ornamented is uncertain; also in verses 23 and 32.

Genesis 37:28 That is, about 8 ounces (about 0.2 kilogram)

Genesis 37:35 Hebrew Sheol

Genesis 37:36 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac (see also verse 28 Masoretic Text Medianites

FROM SWEDENBORG

AC 4776

4776. An evil wild beast hath devoured him. That this signifies that the cupidities of evil had extinguished it, is evident from the signification of an "evil wild beast," as being a lie from a life of cupidities (n. 4729), ... A life of cupidities consists in loving self only, and not the neighbor except from self, or for the sake of self. Hence those who are in this life extinguish charity in themselves; and those who extinguish charity, extinguish also love to the Lord; for there is no other means of loving the Lord than charity, because the Lord is in charity....

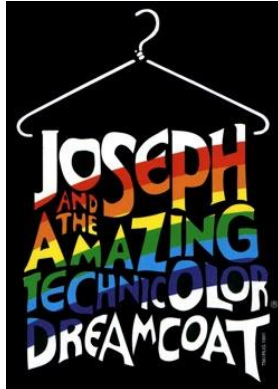
[2] That no one can be saved unless he has lived in the good of charity, and so has become imbued with its affections, which are to will well to others, and from willing well to do well to them; and that no one can receive the truths of faith - that is, become imbued with them and appropriate them to himself - but he who is in a life of charity has been made manifest to me from those who are in heaven, with whom I have been permitted to converse. There all are forms of charity, with beauty and goodness according to the quality of their charity; their delight, satisfaction, and happiness are from their being able to do good to others from good will. The man who has not lived in charity cannot possibly know that heaven and its joy consist in willing well and in doing well from willing well, because his heaven is willing well to himself, and from this willing well doing well to others, when yet this is hell. For heaven is distinguished from hell in this, that heaven, as above said, is doing good from good will, and hell is doing evil from ill will. They who are in love toward the neighbor do good from good will; but they who are in the love of self do evil from ill will. The reason of this is that they love no one but themselves, and others only so far as they see themselves in them, and them in themselves; they also regard these with hatred, which manifests itself as soon as they recede and are no longer theirs. This is like robbers, who so long as they are banded together love one another, but still at heart desire to kill one another, if plunder may thus be obtained.

MESSAGE

The Coat and Regeneration

A number of years ago, I went to a local summer theater with friends to see the musical, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*. I was delighted by the rousing program of singing through the story of Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery because they were jealous of the beautiful coat his father had made for him. When I first heard the song *There's one more angel in heaven*, I couldn't stop laughing! When Joseph's brothers return to give a cover story to Dad about the wild beast that devoured Joseph as he fought to save them, I was quite amused at how, through music and dance, they try to convince their father that Joseph died a hero. I've heard the musical many times since then, but I still can't stop chuckling when I hear the music. If you haven't seen this Webber and Rice musical – or haven't seen it for a long time – you can follow [this link](#) to a great series of U-Tube presentations on the

story that is fun for the whole family. These are scenes from the 1999 film. Like in the play, there is no spoken dialog; the story is told through music and dance.



Swedenborg, of course, gives us the deeper meaning of this well-known Biblical story.

An evil wild beast hath devoured him. That this signifies that the cupidities of evil had extinguished it, is evident from the signification of an "evil wild beast," as being a lie from a life of cupidities (n. 4729), ... A life of cupidities consists in loving self only, and not the neighbor except from self, or for the sake of self. Hence those who are in this life extinguish charity in themselves; and those who extinguish charity, extinguish also love to the Lord; for there is no other means of loving the Lord than charity, because the Lord is in charity....

The brothers lie because of self-love. They think only of themselves, and cannot see the needs of others. They have no love for others, or for the Divine.

This is the story of all of us before spiritual growth begins. ... *The first stage is called void, emptiness, and darkness.* [AC 7] However, in the second stage, *a distinction is made between the Lord's, and the things that are our own.* As the story unfolds, we see the many tragedies impacting the lives of all of the characters, until the second stage can be seen. Swedenborg tells us that this stage rarely comes *into play without grief, trouble, and misfortune.* This story is one that demonstrates the trauma, fear, and starvation that impacts the lives of all of these people. By the end, we see the spiritual growth in everyone.

This second stage in Swedenborg's account of spiritual growth is sometimes compared to the second and third steps in Alcoholics Anonymous. There are many ideas about ways that there are similar themes in both the 12 steps and Swedenborg's spirituality.

Swedenborg's understanding of the seven days of creation [six days of creation; one of rest] are themes that we find other places throughout mystical literature.

One of them is St. Teresa's *Interior Castle*, where she describes seven rooms en route to God. Here is what Teresa says about the 2nd room of the mansion:

These souls hear our Lord calling them, for as they approach nearer to where His Majesty dwells He proves a loving Neighbour, though they may still be engaged in the amusements and business, the pleasures and vanities of this world. While in this state we continually fall into sin and rise again ... Yet such are the pity and compassion of this Lord of ours, so desirous is He that we should seek Him and enjoy His company, that in one way or another He never ceases calling us to Him. So sweet is His voice, that the poor soul is disconsolate at being unable to follow His bidding at once, and therefore, as I said, suffers more than if it could not hear Him. [The 2nd mansions, chapter 1, point 4].

Evelyn Underhill, noted author on mysticism, also describes a series of stages on the mystical journey of spiritual growth. After the initial awakening [perhaps similar to Swedenborg's first stage], she talks about a

period of "purgation:"

Primarily, then, the self must be purged of all that stands between it and goodness: putting on the character of reality instead of the character of illusion or "sin." It longs ardently to do this from the first moment in which it sees itself in the all-revealing radiance of the Uncreated Light.

There are so many we can look to see the story of spiritual growth. Swedenborg's account of creation is a story of everyone's spiritual journey. Similar themes are found in the 12 steps of A.A., and in much mystical literature, such as St. Teresa's [Interior Castle](#) and Evelyn Underhill's [Mysticism: A Study in Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness](#).

Of course, the most important place to find this story unfolding is in all of lives. How does this journey of spiritual growth play out within your own life?

The closing song is a scene towards the end of the story of Joseph, where there is growth and reconciliation, here is a delightful calypso: It takes place when Benjamin and the brothers have seen 7 years of starvation, and go to Egypt to beg for food. They don't recognize Joseph, who has an item hidden on Benjamin so that he can accuse him of theft. Soon, Joseph reveals himself, and a happy family reunion takes place.



Suffering: The Bill Molsberry Story

February 27, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Mark 3

1Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

4Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

From Swedenborg:

*After the great lights are kindled and placed in the inner self, and the outer self is receiving light from them, the time arrives when we first start to live. Earlier, we can hardly be said to have been alive, thinking as we did that the good we perform and the truth we speak originate in ourselves. On our own we are dead and have nothing but evil and falsity inside, with the result that nothing we produce from ourselves has life. So true is this that by our own power we cannot do anything good—at least not anything inherently good. ...
Heavenly Secrets, #39*

*There is a constant inflow from the spiritual world into the physical world. Unless people realize that there is a spiritual world and that it is as distinct from the physical world's an antecedent circumstance is from its consequence or a cause from it causes, they cannot know anything about inflow.
DLW NCE, 340*

MESSAGE:

Suffering: The Bb Molsberry Story

It was 6:00 PM on May 31, 1997. In an instant, Robert S. Mulsberry's life was changed forever. He had been living an idyllic life in a small Iowa town as a parish minister, as well as a husband, father, and athlete. He had spent the afternoon working on his sermon for the next day, with a text from the 3rd chapter of Mark about Jesus healing on the Sabbath. He never did deliver that sermon, but he lived through it the next day when doctors spent the Sabbath trying to save his life.

At 6 PM on May 31st, he was riding his bike, when a hit and run driver blindsided him. Mulberry barely survived, with permanently paralyzed legs and a life in a wheel chair.

How could he come to terms with such a tragedy? He wrote a book about his healing journey, called *Blindsided by Grace: Entering the World of Disability*.

He writes:

I was blindsided by a drunk driver and have had to face a great deal of uncertainty, loss, grief, and pain. My losses have encompassed more than the use of my legs. I've also lost a sense of self-image that was



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highly dependent on my physical abilities and appearance. I've faced ongoing health issues and reconstructive surgeries. My life expectancy, in all likelihood, will be much reduced. Many people who see me roll cheerfully nod with determination through my day have no idea what it costs me, what I've had to give, and how I still grieve.

But whole new realities have also opened up as a result of this life-changing incident. My pace has slowed down and I have been forced to become more deliberate and disciplined. People tell me that I was a decent enough pastor before the injury, but I feel as though I have become more caring and compassionate since the accident. I can empathize more with the trials that all people go through. I see human diversity in a whole new light. I have begun to develop new theological insights. I've had to rethink my understanding of God's role in tragedy and suffering, and what biblical healing is all about. [16]

Michael J. Fox has a similar perspective. He writes about his experience of being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease:

What [the doctor] did not tell me; what no one could, is these last 10 years of coming to terms with my disease would be the best ten years of my life – not in spite of my illness, but because of it. Coping with the relentless assault and the accumulating damage is not easy. Nobody would ever choose to have this visited upon them. Still this unexpected crisis forced a fundamental life decision: adopt a siege mentality, or embark on a journey. Whatever it was that allowed me to go down the second road ... was unquestionably a gift, and absent this neurophysiological catastrophe, I would never have opened it or been so profoundly enriched. [p. x]

How can we understand such injury and illness from a Swedenborgian perspective? Swedenborg tells us that in the 5th stage of regeneration, we are coming alive – we are awakening to who we really are. What if we awaken to paralyzed legs or Parkinson's Disease?

Eugene Taylor, PhD, is a Swedenborgian who is a Lecturer on Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, and the 1983 William James Lecturer on the Varieties of Religious Experience at Harvard Divinity School. In his book, *A Psychology of Spiritual Healing*, he discusses a way to understand healing:

Often, we think of sickness as something transitory; but for millions of people, illness is chronic, even lifelong. The loss of limbs, a radical disfigurement, terrible pain, all of these may be permanent adjustments that a person has to make. Chronic illness, however, can also be a stimulus to kinds of internal growth that would not have been other possible. ... Beethoven composed symphonies while completely deaf. Jackson Pollock, as well as numerous other artists, used conditions of psychopathology to produce new dimensions in modern art. ... while terrible things might happen to us, there is simply no telling what new doors will open up for us in our response to pain, sickness, and infirmity. Our illness can always become the vehicle toward the actualization of a spiritual destiny higher than the physical or psychological. [140-41]

All of this makes sense from a Swedenborgian perspective.

There is a constant inflow from the spiritual world into the physical world. [DLW 340]

The more we align with the spiritual influx, the more we are in a state of healing; regardless of the circumstances of the body.

Physicist Stephen Hawkins says of his severe disabilities:

I guess we're all pretty disabled on the cosmic scale. What difference is a few muscles more or less? Disability does not really affect my consciousness. I see it as an inconvenience like color blindness.

Through reading Swedenborg, Helen Keller came to have a similar view on her disabilities. It was only her physical sight and physical hearing that were impaired. Internally, everyone has impairment of the spiritual eyes and ears. Hers, however, were far more developed than for most people around her.

The true principle of cure is the divine love brought by the Lord's humanity and life of divine truth ... AC 5712



We can love who we are.

Molsberry writes:

If I could be miraculously cured, would I go for it? Darn straight I would! I'm no idiot.but have some gifts appeared as a result of – not just in spite of, but also because of – my injury and subsequent disability? Yes. And is life – just as it is, with no miracle cure on the horizon – manageable? Yes. And is it – just as it is - a good life?.... Darn tootin'! Michel J. Fox considers himself a lucky man for having been diagnosed with Parkinson's. I consider myself gifted for having been made aware of the blessings that followed my injuries and disability. ...Acceptance is getting to the place where you can value your current condition, whatever it may be, in spite of its limitation. [75]

The basis of healing is the Divine influx. As we align with this, we find healing. It may not be paralyzed legs walking again. But it could be a paralyzed soul dancing.

What challenges do you face in your life: physically, emotionally, or spiritually? Are there spiritual blessings in your challenges? How can you find healing through aligning with the Divine in you?



Suffering: The Bauby Story

March 6, 2011

READINGS

Matthew 5: New International Version

Love for Enemies

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor[i] and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

From Swedenborg

234. Laws of Permission Are Also Laws of Divine Providence

There are no “laws of permission” that are simply that, or that are separate from the laws of divine providence. They are the same thing; so saying that God allows something to happen does not mean that he wants it to happen but that he cannot prevent it because of his goal, which is our salvation. Whatever happens for the sake of this goal, our salvation, is in accord with the laws of divine providence, since as already noted [183, 211], divine providence is always moving away from and contrary to our own intentions. It is constantly focused on its goal; so at every moment of its work, at every single step of its course, when it notices that we are straying from that goal it leads and turns and adapts us in accord with its laws, leading us away from evil and toward good. We will see shortly that this cannot be accomplished without allowing bad things to happen.

MESSAGE:

Suffering: The Jean-Dominique Bauby Story

Lent

Lent is the 40 days [not counting Sundays] before Easter. It begins with Ash Wednesday. The date changes each year, between Feb. 4 and March 10. This year, it is on March 9th.

Some churches observe the day by putting ashes, in the shape of a cross, on the foreheads of those attending the service.

During Lent, Christians honor the 40 days Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. Some take on a spiritual discipline or give up something during the season.

This Year’s Theme for Lent

For Lent this year, we are going to focus on the theme of suffering and tragedy as discussed in Bruce Henderson’s book: [Why Does God Let It Happen?](#) You can order this book through the [Swedenborg Foundation](#)

if you would like to have a copy.



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This award-winning book incorporates many of the insights of the ground-breaking book: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Rabbi Kushner. However, Henderson's book is written from a Swedenborgian perspective.

You might want to purchase Henderson's book yourself to read during this season. However, you won't need the book to follow the messages, which will contain quotations, summaries, and UTube videos.

Today, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, we'll look at the concepts in Henderson's introduction. Next week, we'll delve into Chapter 1.

In his introduction, Henderson gives these four points that are core to his book:

1. God is completely in control
2. God never wills tragedy, but God does allow free will [permissions]
3. *Permission* is the tragedy; *Providence* is the transformation afterwards
4. God sees in all time and space; our view is limited

Henderson says that Swedenborg is clear that it is **never** God's will that bad things happen to us and *God will not permit anything evil that cannot be turned eventually to good.* [p. xiv]

How does God help us transform life's tragedies into the triumphs of regeneration? That will be an important theme in the coming weeks.

This week, let's look at how God worked in the life of one person who encountered deep tragedy.

Jean-Dominic Bauby

Jean-Dominique Bauby lived an exciting life as editor of the French magazine *Elle*. Then, when only 43, he suffered a stroke that left him totally paralyzed. He could not speak, and could not move any parts of his body – except for his eyelids. This condition is called "locked-in syndrome."

As you can imagine, Bauby suffered an intense depression and desire to die.

Yet, he slowly became transformed inside. He developed an alphabet code through blinking his eyelid and, through it, wrote a compelling book named *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. It was later made into an enchanting movie.

The Christian movie review site, *Hollywood Jesus*, says this about it:

The film is showing us how we have to deal with suffering and with bad things happening to us. We're strong people. This film shows us the dignity, and the courage, and the patience. We don't decide for so many things. The only thing we can decide is the way we handle situations and the way we see situations. This is a hopeful film; it's all about hope and life.

The first time Bauby saw himself in a mirror after his stroke, he wrote:

Whereupon a strange euphoria came over me. Not only was I exiled, paralyzed, mute, half deaf, deprived of all pleasures, and reduced to the existence of a jellyfish, but I was also horrible to behold. There comes a time when the heaping up of calamities brings on uncontrollable nervous laughter – when, after a final blow from fate, we decide to treat it all as a joke. [p. 25]

After his stroke, he identified with a diving bell, which has a strong pressure to help divers stay under

water. Yet, as discovered his imagination, he came to feel as free as a butterfly.

Far from such din, when blessed silence returns, I can listen to the butterflies that flutter inside my head. To hear them, one must be calm and pay close attention, for their wing beats are barely audible. Loud breathing is enough to drown them out. This is astonishing; my hearing does not improve, yet I hear them better and better. I must have butterfly hearing. [P. 97]

Bauby had to open his heart to God's influx. When he did so, he discovered a world of joy inside of himself, despite living with "locked-in syndrome."

What ways in your life can you see Divine Providence transforming your tragedies?



Acts of God?

March 13, 2011

READINGS

Psalm 43 (New International Version, ©2011)

Psalm 43

- 1 *Vindicate me, my God,
and plead my cause
against an unfaithful nation.
Rescue me from those who are
deceitful and wicked.*
- 2 *You are God my stronghold.
Why have you rejected me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?*
- 3 *Send me your light and your faithful care,
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.*
- 4 *Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise you with the lyre,
O God, my God.*
- 5 *Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

I have stated that the laws of divine providence are hidden and have been stored up in the wisdom of angels until now. This is because discernment in divine matters has been closed in the Christian world because of our religion. This has made our discernment so dull and stubborn that we cannot understand anything about divine providence except that it exists because we do not want to -- or we do not want to understand because we cannot. All we can do is argue about whether it is real or not and whether it is only general or it deals with details. That is as far as a mind can go once it has been closed in divine matters because of its religion.

Divine Providence #70

MESSAGE:

Acts of God?

Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan



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Minamisanriku is a small town on the Pacific coast of Japan. Its economy depends on tourism and commercial fishing. The town is close to the epicenter of Friday's 8.9 magnitude earthquake which set off a tsunami. More than half of the town's population [about 9,500 people] is unaccounted for as of Saturday evening.

CNN reporter Aaron Lace was in an auditorium in Tokyo when the earthquake hit. He says: *It was an absolutely horrific event The aftershocks are coming every hour ... this is something you would not wish on your worst enemy.*

We are told that the aftershocks could continue for days. One man says he has not slept in some 35 hours because the aftershocks come almost hourly.

People report standing in line for hours to get into grocery stores, only to find the shelves bare when they get inside. Throughout the country people seek for their loved ones, missing in the tsunami.

As of late Saturday night, there is an official death toll of over 800 people, with several thousand having been rescued. Officials worry about melt down at two nuclear reactors.

This is the worst earthquake in the history of Japan, and one of the worst in the world's history.

Many people are calling this event an "act of God." Are the earthquake and tsunami acts of God?

Bruce Henderson in his book *Why Does God Let It Happen*, says that Swedenborg never considers disasters to be acts of God.

We may try to explain away accidents and natural disasters as "acts of God," but they are never his will. ... God created the laws of nature ... he will not interfere with the laws of nature to suit our own idea about what is right. Indeed, the shifting of tectonic plates that results in an earthquake may be just such an example of the laws of nature at work, because God created the world to work that way, he will not change the natural course of events. [p. 65].

Where is God in this tragedy? Henderson writes: *God is never in the accident. He neither causes it nor stops it. He is in the aftermath, with his love always leading to healing and a happier outcome.*

One preacher wrote this response to the Haiti earthquakes last year:

Yes, God created the universe and all its laws of physics, the tectonic plates and how they move together and apart. But does God really decide to send a disaster on one of the poorest countries in the world (or any place else, for that matter)? The Bible raises the question over and over of why bad things sometimes happen, from the book of Job

to the gospels. And it never gives us an answer. If the scriptures don't answer this question, then why do we think we can?

So, are there acts of God when a natural disaster occurs? Absolutely. The acts of God are when someone shelters a child who has suddenly become a homeless orphan, when food is shared, when people donate money or goods, when neighbors use their bare hands to dig through the rubble in search of the living or the dead, when prayers are lifted out of desperation or hope.

Is God present in this disaster? Yes, of course. But not in the sense of causing it or using it as some sort of judgment. God is present in the good done by those who go about doing ordinary and extraordinary things.

Those are the acts of God.

[Melissa Bain Sevier](#)

According to Sevier, the "acts of God" are the actions taken by human beings after a tragedy to help those in need.

Is this a realistic way to look at God's acts in tragedy?

Swedenborg tells us that God is love flowing into us every moment. When we take this love into the world as action, we are bringing God into the lives of others.

From this perspective, the Japan earthquake and tsunami are most definitely "acts of God." Some of the international organizations involved in providing relief include:

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Doctors Without Borders

International Medical Core

Save the Children

Is there a way that the average person can be of help in this disaster? Most of us cannot personally go to Japan to render aid. How do we each become one of the "acts of God?"

[United Methodist Committee on Relief](#)

CNN provides a list of [six ways one can contribute](#) to rescue efforts.

[Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) provides ways to help.

Episcopal Relief and Development

And, of course, let's not forget prayer.

THIS WEEK'S PRAYER

Rev. Judith Vandergrift

Weekly Prayer for the week of 3/13/2011.

Our all Powerful Lord, beloved Prince of Peace, we cry out from our hearts for Your Mercy and Love upon those lost in the Japanese earthquake and the following tsunami. Lord be with the survivors holding them in your loving arms, and comfort those who mourn. Bless the planet earth with your Peace, Love, Wisdom and Mercy. Let your light shine in every heart and mind the world over. Lord, help the relief workers find the living and keep them safe until their work is done.

Lord help us to be compassionate with all the suffering ones in our homeland, help us to be generous with our time, our goods, our love and our understanding. There are so many suffering souls in our world today. They suffer mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Help us to serve our communities carrying out your will for us and removing the blocks that prevent us from bringing your Living Water to a thirsty people. Remove our fears and teach us to live and serve you one day at a time, trusting you for our every need and the needs of others. Thank you for answering our prayers and blessing us with your love. Let us carry that blessing into the world this week. Amen..

Our Hearts Ache Eastward

(For victims of floods, earthquakes and tsunamis in the Pacific)

Safiyah Fosua

O God, our hearts ache eastward
For lives lost
Suddenly
For families swallowed
By water and earth
For home and hearth gone
And memories forever changed
In an instant.

O God, our eyes look to you
For healing
For comfort
For hope
For direction.



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O God,
Our arms reach out
To do all that we can
In whatever ways that we can
For as long as is needed

For neighbors and friends
In the Pacific.

Amen.

How to Help: [United Methodist Committee on Relief \(UMCOR\)](#)



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Does God Play Dice?

March 20, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Matthew 5

NIV

Do Not Worry

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life[Ⓜ]?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

From Swedenborg:

The existence of divine providence is generally recognized, but people do not know its nature. The reason the nature of divine providence is a mystery is that its laws have hidden up to now, stored up in the wisdom of angels; but not they are to be revealed so that Lord may receive the credit he deserves and we may stop claiming credit for what is not ours. Divine Providence, #70;

Message

Does God Play Dice?

This message is based on Chapter 2 of Bruce Henderson's book, Why Does God Let It Happen?

The earthquake that hit was one of the worst in history: 8.5 to 8.9 on the Richter scale. Shortly afterwards, a massive tsunami brought tidal waves to the region. Thousands perished. This was not, however, the recent tragedy in Japan. This was on Nov. 1, 1755, in Lisbon, Portugal.

The quake happened at 9:30 A.M. when many were in church to honor All Saints Day. Many people died right in their pews at worship.



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Inevitably, the questions were asked about God's role in this. Because Lisbon was an active center for the Catholic Church, many Protestant clergy pondered whether the act was an expression of God's judgment on Catholicism.

The tragedy impacted all areas of life for many people, and the questions about God ran deep. For many people, their faith was shaken. In the cynicism, Voltaire wrote *Candide*, mocking those who would believe in a loving God involved in such a tragedy.

Many could no longer reconcile their belief in an omnipotent God who willed every event and had a reason behind each one. The simplistic orthodoxy of the time started to crumble, as many sought for a more complex understanding of Providence.

Bruce Henderson, in his book, *Why Does God Let It Happen*, points out that people debated whether there was a Divine presence who planned each event of life; or whether natural laws were the will of Providence. Henderson reminds us again of Swedenborg's view that *God does permit what he does not will for the sake of our freedom.* [P. 24].

Does God play dice? Albert Einstein had a clear answer to that question. He said: **God does not play dice.** Henderson goes on to say about Einstein: *He was convinced there were immutable laws and a form of order at play; not chaos and coincidence.* [p. 25] Einstein saw the world like a big library, which a small child enters. The child does not understand how books are written, how they are categorized, how they are understood. But the child intuits that there is an order at work.

Einstein felt certain that there was order in the Universe, even though we were like child small children in a huge library and could not understand the organization. However, Henderson points out that actually those laws had been understood – by Emanuel Swedenborg. They reveal that Providence does not will tragedies, but does always guide the aftermath to good.

The laws explain how it is that God does not play dice. God does not gamble with our lives. God does not interfere with free will or natural law.

What are these laws that prove that God does not play dice? Henderson summarizes the five laws revealed to Swedenborg:

1. God allows evil to exist so that we can have free will. We have to live between heaven and hell in order to have the free choice that makes us human.
2. We have to be free to act from our own will, as long as we can make rational choices. We cannot be in a process of regeneration if we live with “fear, disease, insanity, or ignorance.” That means that in cases of a mental illness that impairs rational thinking, one is not making free choices. If we don't know all of the facts or we are afraid to make our own choice, then we are not free to choose.
3. We cannot be required to believe in God; that takes away our freedom. God will never force us to make certain choices or believe in a certain way.

4. We have to be able to recognize evil in the world in order to be able to reject it. We have to be able to see the consequences of good and of evil choices in our lives
5. We can't see the specifics of how Divine Providence is working in our lives. If we know how God was at work in our lives, we might resent the direction God has in mind for us and rebel. Or we might choose that direction to be obedient, but not out of our worked it out in free will.

These five laws constitute a big part of Swedenborg's *Divine Providence*. In the introduction to the New Century Edition, Gregory Johnson writes about these laws:

Here he [Swedenborg] shows his greatest psychological acuity. He also demonstrates how uniquely adapted his theology is to the Enlightenment, with its central emphases on critical reason as opposed to blind faith, freedom as opposed to force, and natural law as opposed to miracles and visions." [P. 24].

If God is not playing dice with your life, then laws are being followed. What do these laws of Providence mean for you in your life?

Do you see ways that you live between good and evil – heaven and hell – in your life?

Are you able to make to make free and rational choices in your life? If not, how is your freedom limited?

Are you free to choose your own beliefs?

Can you see some of the consequences of good and evil choices in life?

To what extent can you sense how God is guiding you? Are you frustrated that you can't see this more clearly?

What are the biggest tragedies in your life? Can you see ways that Providence has or is leading you towards great good afterwards?

Let us pray.

Weekly Prayer for 3/20/2011.

Beloved Creator, my heart is full of sadness, so many losses in Japan, and other countries from war and unrest, fostered by judgment, jealousy and greed. Genocide of they who are considered different. So many destructive acts against God's children, a child just like me. How can I, as one, in a world of many make a difference? What can I change? What can I do? What can I give?

Will my dollar make a difference in the relief efforts of Japan and Haiti? Will my dollar make a difference to the homeless one asking for change on the street? Will my hello and smile make a difference to one who has lost hope? Oh, Lord, show me the way to be more generous, loving, compassionate and kind.

In this time of Lent, show us what we can do to change and thus change the world by changing one habit in us. Lord, help us to be better disciples. Please show us the way, Lord, to be a better members of God's world and to make a difference by recognizing and changing our life's negative habits. What ever your will is for us, that is what we want. Let us give away more smiles, more hugs, more positive comments, more dollars, more support to our brothers and sisters. Thank you for showing us the way to increase the light in us and the love in our hearts. Give us the energy to carry out our individual purposes in this life. Bless each person daily and bless us to be your givers of unconditional love this week. Thank you for your blessings and guidance. AMEN.

Rev. m. judith vandergrift



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Joe Encounters Divine Law

March 27, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

NIV

Psalm 54

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A maskil[b] of David. When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"

*1 Save me, O God, by your name;
vindicate me by your might.*

*2 Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.*

*3 Arrogant foes are attacking me;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—
people without regard for God.[c]*

*4 Surely God is my help;
the Lord is the one who sustains me.*

*5 Let evil recoil on those who slander me;
in your faithfulness destroy them.*

*6 I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;
I will praise your name, LORD, for it is good.
7 You have delivered me from all my troubles,
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.*

Footnotes:

1. Psalm 54:1 In Hebrew texts 54:1-7 is numbered 54:3-9.
2. Psalm 54:1 Title: Probably a literary or musical term
3. Psalm 54:3 The Hebrew has Selah (a word of uncertain meaning) here.

From Swedenborg:

154. *The appearance is that man is led and taught by himself; in reality he is led and taught by the Lord alone. Those who confirm the appearance in themselves and not the reality at the same time are unable to remove evils from themselves as sins, but those who confirm the appearance and at the same time the reality can do so; for evils are removed as sins apparently by the man, but really by the Lord. The latter can be reformed, but the former cannot.*
Divine Providence



Message

Joe Encounters Divine Law

Last Thursday, in our chatroom, we talked about Swedenborg's five laws of Divine Providence. It was easiest to understand them when we put them in the context of our own lives. Inspired by that discussion, comes the following fictional story of Joe, a man who encountered each of the five laws during his life time.

PART I: JOE DISCOVERS LAW #1

Joe, age 18

Mary beamed with pride as she snapped photos of her son Joe at his college graduation. Joe's father had passed away many years ago, and she had struggled as a single mother to support Joe and his younger sister. She knew she had given the kids a solid religious upbringing with good values. She was confident that Joe would be a good, solid citizen in whatever work he did.

Joe did not have the same goals as his mother had for him. He wanted to make money. Period. He had experienced the poverty of the years after his Dad died, and no way would he go back there.

He was mulling two different job offers. The first one was the job his Mother wanted him to take. As a pharmaceutical researcher, the government had offered him a job in the testing labs on safety of new products. It was a decent job, but with low pay and low benefits. He was really interested in the other job he had been offered by a private drug company that had a shady reputation. He knew he would be expected to fudge test results to meet the desires of the company; not the needs of consumers. But the job would pay big bucks from the start, with a chance for advancement into even higher paying positions.

LAW #1

It Is a Law of Divine Providence That Man Shall Act from Freedom According to Reason

In other words, God allows evil to exist so that we can have free will. We have to live between heaven and hell in order to have the free choice that makes us human. Joe had to be free to choose evil before he could understand the difference between heaven and hell.

[for more, read [Divine Providence](#), Section 5]

PART II: JOE DISCOVERS LAW #2

Joe, age 21

Mary looked sadly through the bars at her unshaven son. He was only half-way through his two-year prison sentence for fraud. His company had been raided and busted, with many employees sent to prison.



Joe was mad. He had had two great years! He had had more money than he had ever seen before. He had loved keeping a lavish bachelor pad and spending a lot of money on gambling and booze. Now he had lost everything – not only his money but his reputation. He would probably never again get a job in his field after this prison record.

Mary had lived with a strong Christian faith, but right now doubted God's goodness. How could God have allowed her son to be tempted by such a disreputable company? How could God have allowed that raid that sent him to jail?

Joe, age 22

For the past year, Joe had resisted all the efforts of the prison chaplain to help him come to terms with what he had done. He said he had no choice: he had been raised in poverty without a father; he could not make any other choice. He was bright and ambitious and shouldn't be held down by rigid research standards. After awhile he let go of believing in those reasons. But then he found another one. He came to recognize that his father had been an alcoholic who died in a car accident while driving drunk. How could Joe have expected to make a different choice when he had an alcoholic father?

He came to recognize that he, too, was an alcoholic. That explained it. His father had given him alcoholism. He was drinking a lot when he made that decisions to work for the shady company. Wasn't his fault.

The prison chaplain, a Swedenborgian, confronted him on that. Rev. Mike said that in one sense while he was drunk he couldn't make free and rational choices. However, he had made a free and rational choice to drink. And now he could make a free and rational choice to go to AA meetings.

With his Mom's pleadings, he started attending prison AA.

Rev. Mike said his regeneration was beginning!

LAW #2

It Is a Law of Divine Providence That Man Shall Remove Evils as Sins in the External Man of Himself, and Only So Can the Lord Remove the Evils in the Internal Man and at the Same Time in the External

For more, read [Divine Providence](#) Section 6

We have to be free to act from our own will, as long as we can make rational choices. We cannot be in a process of regeneration if we live with "fear, disease, insanity, or ignorance." That means that in cases of a mental illness or drugs that impairs rational thinking, one is not making free choices. If we don't know all of the facts or we are afraid to make our own choice, then we are not free to choose.

Joe realized that his drinking had clouded his ability to think rationally. He couldn't exercise his free will unless he had a clear mind. He decided to become an alcohol counselor so that he could help others find a clear and sober mind for making wise decisions.

Part III: Joe Discovers Law #3

Fifteen years later

Joe has married Sally, and together they are raising Judy; who is now twelve. Joe and Sally are starting to argue. Joe was so impressed by the Swedenborgian chaplain in the prison that he became a Swedenborgian and married a Swedenborgian woman. Now they require Judy to also be Swedenborgian.

It wasn't that they required her to go to Sunday School and camps that she minded; it was that they insisted that she understand the faith the same way they did. Her father kept reading to her from *Divine Providence* and saying she should believe this way because her wise parents did.

Her mother talked about a personal experience in her own life. She had seen an angel when she was young, and that experience led her to the Swedenborgian Church. That angel had been a miracle from God. Judy should believe as her mother did for that reason.

One day at Convention, Joe ran into Rev. Mike – his prison chaplain from years ago. He had coffee with Mike and explained the problems they had with Judy. Rev. Mike reminded Joe that Swedenborg said faith could not be compelled. Each person must find their own faith in their own life; you couldn't require your child to believe as you did.

LAW #3

It Is a Law of Divine Providence That Man Shall Not Be Compelled by External Means to Think and Will, Thus to Believe and Love What Pertains to Religion, but Bring Himself and at Times Compel Himself to Do So

For more, read DP section 7

In other words, we cannot be required to believe in God; that takes away our freedom. God will never force us to make certain choices or believe in a certain way. We can't be expected to form our beliefs on experiences of other people -- even when they seem like miracles. We still have to figure it all out for ourselves, in free will.

Part IV: Joe Discovers Law #4

Another ten years have passed. It is Judy's graduation day from college.

Judy went to college and became an investment broker. Her parents were so proud of her! Joe had some concerns when she considered an investment company that he knew was shady and did illegal investing. He sat Judy down and told her his story. He forbade her to enter that firm; he wanted to protect his daughter from making the same mistakes he had. Judy stormed out,

and didn't speak with her father for years. *On the way out she said, "Dad, I have to be free to make my own mistakes."*

Five years later

Joe was at the prison on visiting day. He was so upset that Judy was in prison for illegal stock transactions. Rev. Mike was still the chaplain there and Joe talked with him. Joe felt his life was worthless. The only thing he had wanted as a father was to save his daughter from making the same mistakes that he had. He was certain as long as he raised her in a solid Swedenborgian church and told her about his own mistakes that she would not make the same ones. Where had he gone wrong?

Rev. Mike reminded him that Joe himself only learned from his own experiences; and Judy would only really learn from her own.

LAW #4

It Is a Law of Divine Providence That Man Shall Be Led and Taught by the Lord out of Heaven by Means of the Word and Doctrine and Preaching from It, and This to All Appearance as of Himself

For more, read DP section 8

We have to be able to recognize evil in the world in order to be able to reject it. We have to be able to see the consequences of good and of evil choices in our lives. Judy would have to learn from her own mistakes; she couldn't learn just by hearing about her father's.

Part V: Joe Discovers Law #5

Five years later

Joe and Sally loved their retired life. They had lots of time to attend Swedenborgian events. They especially loved spending time with Judy and her toddler son. They were so proud of Judy! Rev. Mike had helped Judy understand that she had had an alcoholic grandfather and raised by an alcoholic father. Even though Joe had been in recovery before Judy was born, she was still impacted by dynamics of an alcoholic family.

He persuaded her to begin prison Al-Anon meetings.

At last Judy had begun regeneration! She became an elementary school teacher and started a marriage and family.

They were all together on a sunny day at a church camp. Judy was excitedly telling her parents how she would raise little Joey. First he would be required to believe in all of Swedenborg's concepts. Then she would tell Joey about all the mistakes she had made in her life; and that would protect him from making the same ones. She said, "Dad, when Joey is older, will you tell

him about the alcoholism in the family and your own recovery journey? I know that genetically he probably has the same genes, but if you explain all of this to him, I'm sure he'll never drink or use drugs."

Joe had a thoughtful look in his eyes as he rocked and sipped tea. "Yeup. I'd love to tell Joey all about those things. But, honey, don't get your hopes up that us sharing our experiences with him will protect him from having to have his own experiences with life...."

LAW #5

It Is a Law of Divine Providence That Man Shall Not Perceive or Feel Any of the Activity of Divine Providence, and Yet Should Know and Acknowledge Providence

for more, read [Divine Providence, Section 9](#)

If we know how God was at work in our lives, we might resent the direction God has in mind for us and rebel. Or we might choose that direction to be obedient, but not out of our worked it out in free will.

Joe had no idea how God had worked in his life and was working in the life of his daughter and grandson. He realized that it is a mystery. He only knew that whatever dumb mistakes he had made, it seemed that God not only brought him through it, but made him stronger and wiser in the end.

Let us pray.

Weekly Prayer for 3/27/11

Our Precious Lord, our Protector, Teacher, and Beloved: thank you for your steadfast presence even when we do not think you are there. We may not know where we are going or if our work is what you truly want us to be doing, but we know that your holy presence sustains us through those times of self doubt in our wilderness walk. We know that you will guide us to our destination in exactly the right time and in exactly the right way. You know our deepest loves. If these are not the ones that open us to heaven on earth, help us to realize our blindness and our errors. Help us to change and open to you and your loving guidance. Wherever we are, however we are, what ever we are doing or not doing..... Give us peace on earth and true, honest, loving of our planetary fellows. With grateful and full hearts we praise you. AMEN.

Rev. Judith Vandergrift

The Transformed Tragedy

April 3, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

From Swedenborg:

Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads towards an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him he is at peace, since he fears nothing and no anxiety about things to come disturbs him. How far a person attains this state depends on how far he attains love to the Lord. Secrets of Heaven, #8455

Message

The Transformed Tragedy

How can we transform suffering? Bruce Henderson's inspiring book, *Why Does God Let it happen*, provides some Swedenborgian approaches to that question.

By turning to Swedenborg, we can be reminded that God never wills pain or suffering. God allows it through free will; our pathway to salvation. God is always present to help transform the worst suffering into goodness and hope.

Henderson says that this is where "faith" develops. We need to have faith that God's Love is stronger than hate, and that God can turn every tragedy into triumph. That is a very reassuring theology. However, putting it into practice is always a challenge. Exactly how can we do this?

I think the best way to understand that process is by looking at a family that transformed its life after tragedy. Many of you know about the story of Horatio and Anna Spafford, who lost four daughters in the tragic sinking of a ship. Many of us know how Horatio transformed that event by writing the words to a beloved song that comforts and inspires today. However, it is not so commonly known what the Spafford's did after that to enhance the lives of thousands of children.

HORATIO SPAFFORD

Horatio Spafford was a prominent attorney in Chicago in the mid 1800's. He owned considerable real estate. Then, in the great fire of 1871, he lost virtually all of his wealth. He and his wife were devoted Christians who wanted to serve others. They worked tirelessly to help those who had become homeless in the fire. After two years, they were exhausted, and decided on a trip abroad that would start by working with evangelist Dwight L. Moody. At the last minute, Horatio had a business crisis and decided to join the family later. Anna and the four girls boarded the ship *Ville Du Havre*.



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Another ship collided with theirs, and 226 people were drowned, including all four of the Spafford daughters.

Here is an account of Anna's experience from the *Christian History Institute*:

"Anna Spafford later spoke of being sucked violently downward. Baby Tanetta was torn from her arms by a collision with some heavy debris, with a blow so violent that Anna's arm was severely bruised. She flailed at the water trying to catch her baby. Anna caught Tanetta's gown for just a moment before another smashing blow tore the little girl out of her arms forever. ...Anna, barely conscious, ... clung on to a small plank and the next thing she recalled was the splash of an oar as she lay at the bottom of a small boat. Bruised and sick, her long hair was matted with salt and her dressing gown shredded. But the pain in her body was nothing compared to the pain in her heart as she realized that her four daughters had been lost in the disaster. A young male passenger, afloat on a piece of wood, came upon Maggie and Annie, the two oldest Spafford children. At his direction, each girl grasped one of his side pockets as he tried to find a board large enough to support all three of them. After about 30 or 40 minutes in the water, he found a piece of wreckage and struggled to help the two young girls climb atop the board. But as he watched, their weary arms weakened, and he saw their eyes close. Their lifeless forms floated away from his own fatigue-paralyzed arms. No clues ever surfaced about the fate of little Bessie.

She faced unbearable despair as she made her way back on the rescue vessel, not certain she wanted to continue living. Horatio got on a boat to meet her. As his boat passed the spot where his daughters had drowned, he penned the words to the song, *it is Well With My Soul*.

It is a deeply moving song about faith in God during times of sorrow. It has inspired countless numbers of people through the years.

Ann and Horatio returned to Chicago to carry on their lives. They had three more children. Sadly, their son died when he was four of scarlet fever. However, there were two girls – Bertha and Grace -- who grew up to carry on the good work of their parents.

In September, 1881, the family and a few friends decided to immigrate to Jerusalem. They moved into a house in the old part of the city, and started a community they called *The American Colony*. Their purpose was to show the love of Jesus by serving those in need. The colony later became the subject of a Nobel Prize winning book, *Jerusalem*, written by Swedish novelist Selma Lagerlöf.

They worked with people of any religion without attempting to convert them, so they gained the trust of Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

The community grew over the years. In 1894, Anna Spafford visited Chicago and made contact with Olaf Henrik Larsson, the leader of the Swedish Evangelical Church. A number Swedes from Chicago decided to join the community. Thirty-eight adults and seventeen children sold all their possessions and joined the Colony, arriving in July 1896.

In 1898, the Colony bought an old camera to document the visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany to Jerusalem. From this humble beginning, the photographic studio became world famous for the thousands of images it produced of the Holy Land and the Middle East. Among the Colony members who worked in the studio were Lewis Larsson, Lars Lind, John Whiting, Frank

Baldwin, and Eric Matson, whose photographic archive is housed in the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

During and after World War I, the American Colony ran soup kitchens, hospitals, and orphanages.

The American Colony finally came to an end in the 1950's. However, in 1925, Bertha Spafford Vester founded the Spafford Children's Center in Jerusalem. They provide medical care for children of any religion. The Center is still active today, and is run by descendants of Horatio and Anna. They help over 30,000 children every year. To learn more, visit their [internet site](#).

Is this an example of transformation of tragedy? Anna and Horatio could have lived out their days in seclusion, mourning the deaths of their 4 daughters. They could have spent the rest of their lives re-living the decision for the family to go ahead of Horatio on their trip to England. Horatio could have spent his life blaming himself for not keeping the family with him until they could have gone together. Anna could have spent her life berating herself for not having been able to hold onto to her baby in the intense waves engulfing their ship. They could have kept this tragedy on the personal level: what was God teaching them? Instead, they took the impact of the tragedy into the world. The world lost the contributions of the 4 Spafford daughters who drowned. The world gained the survival of thousands of children through the good work of the colony and children's center in Jerusalem.

We don't know if the Spafford's had ever heard of Emanuel Swedenborg. Their lives in Chicago did overlap that of Daniel Burnham's [the architect's] family, and they worked closely with Swedish people who emigrated from Chicago.

We do know that they deeply lived two important dimensions of Swedenborg's theology:

Interfaith perspective. They lived a life inspired by Jesus, and never tried to convert people to their religion. They became trusted by Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

Transformation by Uses: Swedenborg's approach to transforming tragedy was to go into the world and make a difference. Despite immediate suffering, the long-term impact can be one of transforming the world.

Oh, and the world also gained a song whose lyrics has inspired people for generations to trust in God!

Divine Providence does not bring us tragedy to teach us a lesson. God does ask that we turn to DP to find ways to create meaning out of tragedy through our work in the world.

What tragedies in your life have transformed the world in some way – no matter how small?

How could current tragedies help you bring transformation into the world?

Let us pray:

Dear Holy Beloved Lord, bring me back to you. Whenever I am in doubt, bring me back to you. Whenever I stray for any reason, bring me back to you. It is in that prayer place of

communion with you that I find my true self and your purpose for my life. Thank you Lord for Truth, Wisdom, Love, and Willingness to change. I am yours, your child, have mercy on me, give me the knowledge of the truth of my whole soul and help me in my work to change those things that lead me away from you. Thank you, Lord. Amen
Rev. Judith Vandergrift



The Dawn of the Dark

April 10, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 1
Cor. 13:8

From Swedenborg:

Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 4261

And he passed the night there in that night. That this signifies in that obscure state, is evident from the signification of "passing the night," and also of "night," as being an obscure state (see n. 1712, 3693).

Message

The Dawn of the Dark

I was tired, but filled with peace, as I zipped up my suitcase. I pulled out the handle and rolled it down the hall of the retreat center where I had just spent 10 days in a workshop/retreat with staff of the Shalem Institute for Spirituality. Faculty members were milling about as students were saying good-bye and heading out the door. I saw Jerry May standing there. He was my very favorite teacher -- both for his wisdom and his sense of humor.

"Jerry, it's been a great residency!" I said. Then I added with a half smile "But, uh, I'm a little apprehensive about next year's residency. You said we would learn all about the dark night of the soul. Everything we learn here is so experiential. Just how are you going to teach us about the dark night?"

His eyes twinkled as he said, "Oh, we will have a great time next year in the dark night of the soul! I can't wait!" I muttered something like "that makes one of us" as I hugged him good by.

That year, our assigned readings helped prepare us to understand the "dark night." The concept was written about by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross in the 1500's. In the years after them, their work was misunderstood, and John's was possibly altered. The dark night came to be understood as a time of suffering that God brings to us to make us more spiritual.



Actually, the Spanish word John uses in *The Dark of the Soul* is “oscura” which means obscure or hidden. It is a period when we don’t understand how God is working in our lives; God’s purpose is obscure and mysterious.

As I read about how Teresa and John understood the “dark night,” I couldn’t help but think about the summer I spent in Mexico as a college student. I grew up in northern Illinois, where we had short summers. I loved playing in the gentle rays of the summer sun in my backyard. I knew what to expect from the sun; it was my friend. Then, I had a summer in Mexico. My Mexican friends took me to the beach one day. They were very worried about my fair skin in the hot sun, and wanted me to use lotion and sit under an umbrella. I thought they were silly; I had spent my childhood in the sunshine. I ignored their advice and romped on the beach in my bathing suit with no lotion or hat or umbrella. I had a great day! But a miserable night. I had the worse sun burn I had ever had. It took me years to understand that in northern Illinois, I had only a limited experience of the sun. When I was farther south and on the ocean, the sun was far more intense than I could have imagined. I had no background for understanding such an intense sun; I should have trusted the friends who tried to prepared me to learn about their sun gradually.

John of the Cross says that a dark night of the soul happens when God is drawing us closer. We have only experienced a tiny part of God and aren’t prepared for the intensity of being closer. So God brings us into a protective darkness until our eyes adjust. Then God brings a slow dawn that we can adjust to gradually.

Jerry Mays book *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth* Came out the year before he died of heart disease. It put together all of the great things I had learned from him at the Shalem residencies.

He wrote the book to dispel many common myths about the dark night of the soul – the primary one being that it is a tragic time with bad things happening. May says that this time is dark not because bad things happen, but because God is obscured in mystery. It is a time to experience the “not knowing” about God; which is actually a good thing.

He says it is a stage of spiritual growth that happens to most of us. In fact, as May describes it, it is part of the regeneration process that Swedenborg discusses.

May says, *I think the dark night of the soul gives meaning to life.* P. 5

He especially wants to dispel the notion that one must suffer in order to find deep spirituality. May considers that nonsense. It is not “suffering” that is needed; it is a willingness to let God guide us into unfamiliar places that may seem dark. It is our resistance to God’s guidance that can cause us discomfort.

Teresa and John – like Swedenborg – emphasize the union between human and divine. It is not something we have to achieve; it is something we have to recognize. It always has existed and always will. Teresa heard God say to her in prayer: *Seek yourself in Me, and in yourself seek Me.*”

Like Swedenborg, they emphasize that we cannot by ourselves achieve spiritual growth; it comes from God. Yet God cannot bring us to a spiritual depth without our co-operation. Jerry writes, *For Teresa and John, it is a mystical co-creation between God and person.* P. 75

The last chapter of Dr. May's book is called: "Daybreak: the coming of the dawn." Just as the "dark night" means that God's work in our life is obscure, the dawn is greater clarity about God. It is not a bright mid-day sun of clarity, but rather a muted light of early morning.

With the morning dawn, we realize that we have become more free of the attachments that hindered our growth. We may give up some structured spiritual exercises, and instead drift into a "contemplative" knowing of God throughout each day. We are awakening – we have a dawning realization that we are in union with God and all of creation.

God has brought us closer to pure love.

This is not a "once in a lifetime" event, but rather a period of time that can come and go in our lives when God becomes obscure; followed by a new dawn of clarity.

John wrote *The Dark Night of the Soul* as a passionate love poem about the Divine Beloved and the human self becoming one. Below is his poem.

Stanzas Of The Soul

1. *One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
- ah, the sheer grace! -
I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.*

2. *In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
- ah, the sheer grace! -
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.*

3. *On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.*

4. *This guided me
more surely than the light of noon
to where he was awaiting me
- him I knew so well -
there in a place where no one appeared.*

5. *O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the Lover with his beloved,
transforming the beloved in her Lover.*



6. *Upon my flowering breast
which I kept wholly for him alone
there he lay sleeping,
and I caressing him
there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.*

7. *When the breeze blew from the turret,
as I parted his hair,
it wounded my neck
with its gentle hand,
suspending all my senses.*

8. *I abandoned and forgot myself,
laying my face on my Beloved;
all things ceased; I went out from myself,
leaving my cares
forgotten among the lilies.*

Let us pray:

Weekly prayer 4/10/11.

Steadfast Lord, creator of all there is, show us how to open more to you so that our inmost self and our outward appearance match. Help us to keep our hearts and minds focused on the goods of life rather than the evils of life. When we falter in our walk with you, Lord, bring us back to the good path, a positive attitude, and the power of love and forgiveness. Let us serve our community, our church, and our loved ones from that power. We are grateful. Amen.

Rev. Judith



The Flower in the Bulb

April 17, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Luke 19

36As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. **37**As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, **38**saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" **39**Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." **40**He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

From Swedenborg:

6] By the disciples putting their garments on the ass and her colt, was represented that truths in the whole complex were submitted to the Lord as the Highest Judge and King; for the disciples represented the church of the Lord in respect to its truths and goods (n. 2129, 3488, 3858, 6397), and their garments represented the truths themselves (n. 4545, 4763, 5319, 5954, 6914, 6917, 9093) The like was represented by the multitude strewing their garments in the way, and also branches of trees. The reason why they strewed them in the way was that by "a way" is signified the truth whereby the man of the church is led (n. 627, 2333, 3477). The reason why they strewed branches of trees, was that trees signified the perceptions and also the knowledges of truth and good (n. 2682, 2722, 2972, 4552, 7692), consequently "the branches" denote the truths themselves. This was done also in conformity with a customary rite; for when the highest judges and kings rode in their solemn procession, the princes of the people then put their garments on the asses and mules, and the people themselves strewed their garments on the way, or in their place the branches of trees; for the judicial function in heaven is the Divine truth from the Divine good, and the regal one is the Divine truth (n. 1728, 2015, 2069, 3009, 4581, 4966, 5044, 5068, 6148). AC 9212

Message

The Flower in the Bulb

This is, of course, Holy Week. Today is Palm Sunday, Thursday is Maundy Thursday, and Friday is Good Friday.

This year, Good Friday is also Earth Day.



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The Eco-Justice unit of the National Council of Churches has chosen, as this year's Earth Day theme: *Where Two or More are Gathered: Eco-Justice as Community*.

The Holy Week story is a powerful time to think about community. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, his followers were coming together in a new, enthusiastic community. At last, Jesus would challenge Caesar and bring freedom to his people. By Friday, the supporters were split and terrified.

The first big challenge to community came on Thursday evening; the night of the Passover feast. The gathering at the table was a time of the disciples bonding in their ministries. Jesus broke and blessed the bread, and then the wine, binding the disciples and generations of Christians into a ritual of sharing and joining.

But then Jesus said that the next man who dipped his bread in the wine would betray him. Judas was that man. This budding Christian community was forever split by betrayal. Then Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives.

He took them into nature to pray. Jesus often sought God within nature. That night, Jesus was apart from his community. One disciple was betraying him; the others fell asleep. Before long, Peter denied three times that he ever knew Jesus. Now, Christian community was divided by betrayal, inattention, and denial.

By Sunday morning, the community was scattered and dispirited. It was only when the early resurrection stories began to spread, that the community came together in a powerful way that exists today.

For Holy Week this year, let's integrate our commitment to the environment with our reflections on the last week Jesus had on the earth.

MAUNDY THURSDAY REFLECTION

On Maundy Thursday, we often ponder the theme of betrayal and denial. We consider the many ways that each of us betrays the Lord and denies our faith. This year, let's also consider the ways we have betrayed the environment, and denied its fragility. Let's consider how our lives upon this earth have betrayed God's creation.





GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTION

Good Friday is a day on which we often ponder the death of Jesus. Perhaps this year, we can also mourn the death of many of the world's species of birds, fish, and animals. We can mourn the death of many bodies of waters, and rainforests, and plants. These are photos of species that have become extinct since 2000.



Black Rhino



The Golden Toad



Pyrenean Ibex



Hawaiian Crow

On next Sunday we will honor the Resurrection; not just the one in the Christian story; but the resurrection of hope we have for the environment and all that lives within it. Next Sunday, as

we rejoice in never-ending life; we can look at ways we can take our hope and our faith into the world, to bring renewed life to the earth.

In fact, Swedenborgians can understand Easter Week as affirming the hologram in which we live. We all live on this earth, each of us a part of the whole. And every plant, animal, body of water, sunshine – everything – was created by and with the Divine. So it doesn't matter to us how others understand themselves and the earth in relation to the Divine. It doesn't matter for us how other Christians understand the crucifixion and resurrection. All that matters for us is that we stay in community with all parts of the hologram; so that together we can preserve the environment.

As we honor Holy Week, let's take note of Earth Day on Good Friday, and remember that it is through holographic community that can truly save the earth; and in the process, save ourselves. On Easter Sunday, we'll embrace the resurrection of the Lord; and the resurrection we are bringing to the entire created world.

Let us pray.

Weekly Prayer for 4/17/2011.

Our Sweet Lord, who has created the earth and all the creatures and plants therein, we often forget to show our gratitude for the beautiful and wondrous planet we live on. We thank you Lord for the gift of life that we have and the awe inspiring planet that you have gifted us. Let us be better stewards of the world around us. Help us to be aware of the things we do each day that may harm our planet, and help us to change those habits so that our planet will be here for generations to come.

When we think of the celebration of Palm Sunday, let us be reminded of the honoring of our Lord that day by the multitude. The symbolic bowing down of all life to Him through the palm fronds laid at his feet. May we have the humility in the days ahead to honor our Lord and the earth created for us to inhabit humble hearts and acts. With deep gratitude for the life given to us and the beautiful planet we inhabit, we thank you. AMEN

Rev. Judith

Resurrection: What's It To You?

April 24, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

1After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

8So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

From Swedenborg:

The state of glorification is also the state of union. He was in this state when He was transfigured before His three disciples; and also when He wrought miracles; and when He said that He and the Father are one, that the Father is in Him and He in the Father, and that all things the Father had are His; and when the union was fully completed, that He had "power over all flesh," John xvii. 2; and that He had "all power in heaven and in earth," Matt. xxviii. 18; besides many other passages to the same effect.

RESURRECTION: WHAT'S IT TO YOU?

A Celebration of Easter in Song, Dance, Art, and Stories

From the National Council of Churches:

BISCO, a small faith-based organization base in Thibodaux, LA, has been at the center of Gulf Coast recovery from the day the oil spill started. They recently shared this story.



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

In February, we were on our way to deliver funds to a family in Louisiana that had been devastated by the oil spill. The support was from Ross University, a medical school in the West Indies. The day we were preparing to take the check to one of the three families that would be receiving assistance,

we learned that one of the family members had found work and was now employed after looking for more than a year. Instead of accepting the check, even though he and his family certainly continue to need financial help, they elected to give it to a family who was not as fortunate—of which there are many in Southern Louisiana. Although they were still in need, they elected to share their blessings with others—

helping families put food on the table and hopefully a roof over their head. This story is a reflection of the attitude here in Louisiana. Although we are struggling to get to our feet, we have not forgotten about our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, our friends. The Gulf of Mexico and communities in the coast will be reborn as the community and family that God intended.

Eco-Justice Programs

National Council of Churches USA

From Artists



Easter Morning

Notes: Dr. He Qi is a professor at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and a tutor for master candidate students in the Philosophy Department of Nanjing University. He is also a member of the China Art Association and a council member of the Asian Christian Art Association.

Date: 2001

Artist: He, Qi



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life



Title:	Noli Me Tangere - "Do not hold me."
Date:	1518
Artist:	Correggio, 1489?-1534
Building:	Museo del Prado
City/Town:	Madrid
Country:	Spain

RT. REV. V. EUGENE ROBINSON: First Episcopal Bishop elected as an "out" gay man:

The fact is, at least for me, the resurrection makes all the difference in how I live my life. The resurrection is how I can "be not afraid," but instead be a bold and active witness to the love of God.

When I was preparing for my consecration as the Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, I was getting a lot of death threats. Preparations were being made for the consecration security, and I was asked for my blood type, so that preparations could be made for immediately beginning medical treatment on the way to the hospital, should something violent take place. I remember saying to our two grown daughters, who were worried and anxious about my well-being, "You know, there are worse things than death. Some people actually never live.

-- and that is the worst death of all. If something does happen, remember that the God who has loved me my whole life, will still be loving me, and I will have died doing something I believe in with my whole heart."

As I strapped on my bulletproof vest just before the service, I remember feeling blessedly calm about whatever might happen. Not because I am brave, but because God is good and because God has overcome death, so that I never have to be afraid again

That is the power of the resurrection. NOT in what happens AFTER death, but what the knowledge of our resurrection does for our lives and ministries BEFORE death. I am not worried nearly as much about life after death as about whether or not there is life before death! We are no longer prisoners to the power of the fear of death. We don't have to be worried about how all of this is going to turn out. We know the end of the story. God reigns. Death is vanquished. We are given life eternal in the company of a merciful and loving God and all the saints. Believing that, knowing that, can and does empower us for ministry in God's name



The Risen Lord

Notes:

Dr. He Qi is a professor at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and a tutor for master candidate students in the Philosophy Department of Nanjing University. He is also a member of the China Art Association and a council member of the Asian Christian Art Association.

Date:

2001

Artist:

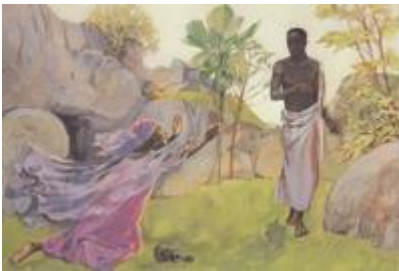
He, Qi

Material:

Other

Country:

[China](#)



Easter - Christ
appears to Mary

Notes:

JESUS MAFA is a response to the New Testament readings from the Lectionary by a Christian community in Cameroon, Africa. Each of the readings were selected and adapted to dramatic interpretation by the community members. Photographs of their interpretations were made, and these were then transcribed to paintings. See: www.jesumafa.com and www.SocialTheology.com.

Date:

1973

Artist:

JESUS MAFA



AUTHOR MARCUS BORG

Not only [does] Jesus live, ... he is a figure of the present and not just of the past, ... he is "Lord"—a divine reality, one with God and having the qualities of God, at "the right hand of God."

This ... meaning of Easter distinguishes experiences of Jesus from other experiences of somebody who has died. Studies suggest that about half of surviving spouses will have at least one vivid experience of their deceased spouse. But if they do, they do not exclaim "My Lord and my God," as if their spouse is now Lord and one with God. But there was something about the experiences of Jesus after his death that led to this exclamation. They were "numinous" experiences—experiences of the sacred—and not just "ghostly" experiences of a dead person.

A SWEDENBORGIAN PERSPECTIVE

I think that Swedenborg would find all of these expressions of "resurrection" to be meaningful.

The state of glorification is also the state of union. He was in this state when He was transfigured before His three disciples; and also when He wrought miracles; and when He said that He and the Father are one, that the Father is in Him and He in the Father, and that all things the Father had are His; and when the union was fully completed, that He had "power over all flesh," John xvii. 2; and that He had "all power in heaven and in earth," Matt. xxviii. 18; besides many other passages to the same effect.

It's important to remember that Swedenborg's Easter is not about the death of the human ego or about the salvation of the sinful soul. It's about allowing our humanity to become transformed in the presence of the Divine. Wilberforce was not a different person after his conversion; nor was John Newton. But they brought the wholeness of their human potential into integration with Spirit. Many traditions talk about the death of the ego, and Swedenborg understood that to be a transformation rather than a death.

Wilson Van Dusen explained the Swedenborgian perspective this way: *"In a real sense self-discovery is always a part of the experience of God. You need to be changed to have the experience, and the experience will further change you. One simple way of describing this is that the experience of God sets a new center to our being."*

Psychologist Carl Jung felt he had a quest to find the deep truths of existence, and his dreams led him to the ancient tradition of alchemy. Alchemy was based on the premise that ordinary lead could be transmuted into gold, if the right formula could be found.

Jung felt that alchemy was actually about changing the lead of ordinary experience into the gold of the mystical union with God.

Evelyn Underhill and other mystical scholars tell us that many alchemists were on a spiritual quest to find union with the Divine. They were trying to find an integration of matter and spirit.

Many images of the alchemists were based on Christian symbols of the Cosmic Christ – the union of human and divine. Most alchemists saw seven stages, ending in union with the divine.

Swedenborg, too, had seven stages of regeneration leading to union. This 7th stage was demonstrated by the resurrection. For Swedenborg, the resurrection was about union of humanity and divinity

Jesus spent his life living in times of “emptying”, when his human ego needed to be let go, and times of “glorification” – or union with the divine. The cross was the final emptying of his ego state when he felt abandoned by God. If you are abandoned by someone, then there are two of you – one does the abandoning of the other. When you become one, there can be no abandonment; only union.

Dr. Bob Kirven says that Swedenborg had a unique understanding of how the divine and human nature intersected. Swedenborg said that spirit and matter were both real, both different, and both the same! They are “*distinguishably one.*”

That is how there is union between humanity and divinity. Swedenborg called it the “Divine human” or the “God-man”. And that is what Easter is all about: showing us the union between human and divine that unite us.

This is one part of Swedenborg’s concept of Easter: the union of humanity and divinity.

Another part of Swedenborg’s Easter can best be understood through the new physics concept of a hologram.

Holography shows a process over time. Jesus was in a process between two states of being. In his human state on the cross, he felt abandoned by God. But this was followed by the state of union. *“After this state comes a second one, the state of being in a partnership with God. In this second state, we do basically the same things, but now we do them with God. We no longer need to attribute to God everything good that we intend and do and everything true that we think and say in the same way as we used to, because now this acknowledgment is written on our heart. It is inside everything we do and everything we say. In this same way, ... The Lord glorified his human nature [meaning that he made it divine], in the same way that he regenerates us [meaning that he makes us spiritual].”*

George Dole says, *“I see the holographic model as implicit in his [Swedenborg’s] Christology. In his view, it is intrinsic to the divine nature to be wholly present in every part of creation, and especially clearly in human beings.”*

Dole says this helps us understand the resurrection. *“It is wholly characteristic of the divine to be wholly present in every part of creation all the time.”*

The Easter story is about how human and divine became one. It is about the divine being in the smallest pieces of existence. It is about God being written on our hearts.

What does the resurrection mean for you in your life?

Let us pray.

Prayer for 4/24/11

While opening the Word to and contemplating 1 Chronicles 29:5 today, I am caught by this one phrase....."Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?"..... On this Easter Day, I think about the Lord's example of His Life, His Service, and His Love. I yearn for renewal...I yearn for more light, more union with Him. I am willing.....

Beloved Lord, thank you for your Peace, your Love, your tender Care. Thank you for the influx of understanding, for the knowledge of my short comings and for the Blessings of renewal this Easter. May I always walk In gratitude for Your Grace. Amen

Rev. Judith



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

May Day Basket

May 1, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

John 14 & 15

10Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.... 20On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

4Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

From Swedenborg:

TC 8 There is an inflow from God into us. ...This inflow comes into our souls because the soul is the inmost and highest part of us. The inflow from God reaches that part first and then comes down into the things below and enlivens them, depending on our openness to what flows in.

What is meant by spiritual influx cannot be better seen than by means of the natural influxes which take place and appear in this world-as by the influx of heat from the sun into all things of the earth. H.S. 6190

May Day Basket from an Angel

It's early morning, and you hear someone at your door. You can't imagine who it could be! You open the door, and are surprised to find that no one is there. Then -- you notice a lovely basket of flowers and goodies hanging on your door. Oh, yes! It's May Day! But where did the basket come from? Was it one of your neighbors? A friend? Or perhaps a gift from an angelic being?

You open the basket to see what is in it. Flowers! You see beautiful flowers in your basket. Why flowers on May Day? You see a little note in the basket that explains:



This tradition probably goes back to the pagan roots of May Day. For the Druids of the British Isles, May 1 was the festival of Beltane; one of the most important festivals of the year. A common May Day custom was lighting a new fire, to encourage the return of the sun.

When Romans occupied the British Isles, they used May 1st to worship Flora, the goddess of flowers. They had a five day celebration, and gradually the rituals of the Floralia were added to those of the Beltane. And many of today's customs on May Day are similar to those combined



traditions.

You dig a bit deeper into the basket, and out pops a beautiful May pole! It has a note attached to it about its origins: *In the Middle Ages, every English village had a May pole. This probably originated in German paganism as a fertility rite. People would dance around a live tree. Over time, two types of pole dancing emerged: dancing in a circle around a tall pole, and holding ribbons on a smaller pole, and intertwining them into some pattern. A folk dance, the Morris Dance evolved in England and is often performed on May Day.*



Then you are puzzled to see an old news reel. It starts to play, and you realize you are watching a strike from Chicago on May 1st, 1886. *Throughout the world, many people honor May Day as a time to honor labor and trade unions. It is called International Workers' day in many places. This is because of what happened in Chicago on May 1st, 1886. Labor unions called a strike for the eight-hour work day. After two days of striking, a fight broke out between workers and police, and the police killed two workers. So on May 4th, there was a huge protest rally at Haymarket Square; claiming the police had murdered workers. Thousands of people were there, and someone threw a bomb at the police, killing one. The police began shooting into the crowd, killing 11 more people. Many of the wounded were afraid they would be arrested if they tried to get medical attention. A controversial trial of sorts followed, in which 8 were tried for their political beliefs. Eventually 4 anarchists were hanged. Around the world, people were outraged about the Haymarket incident.*



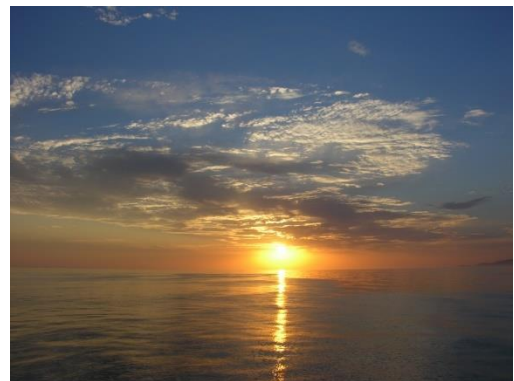
You take a moment of silence for all of those union workers; especially the ones wounded or killed. The next item you pull out is the most amazing of all: A ray of sunshine! You remember that Swedenborg used the sun as an analogy to talk about God, and how God's energy flows into everything.

Wilson Van Dusen wrote: *Influx is the very act by which the Divine flows in and creates.*

He says that an intense experience of God -- like in a mystical encounter, is simply more influx.

Divine energy is ALWAYS flowing into us -- every moment. It is a joyous realization. Just as we sun-deprived feel great joy in the spring; we all can feel great joy anytime by being aware of God's energy always in and around us.

Unlike the seasons, God's inflow is always strong and bright. God's rays do not weaken during certain seasons in certain climates. When we feel spiritually that we are isolated in a long winter, we can remember that God's sunshine is always there -- we just need to notice it. We don't need to limit God's rays to small doses -- there is no danger of sun burn!



Now your basket is empty, and you are surrounded with its many gifts. How are you going to honor this May Day? You think perhaps you will take May Day baskets to your neighbors, and

invite your friends to come dance with you around a May pole. Then, you will stop in town to join the the memorial for all the people who died in the struggle to get unions. It is going to be quite a full May day! You realize that the most important part of the day for you will be to enjoy some sunshine.

Because you live in a cold climate, you just had a cold and stormy winter. But now the snow is gone and the sun is shining! You know that you will find time today to enjoy the warmth and light from the sun. And you will be reminded that the sun is, for Swedenborg, a way we can experience and understand God. So, you are quite certain that an angel is encouraging you to go experience God today!

Let us Pray:

Prayer for the week of 5/1/11:

Father God, thank you for the Peace you bring to us when we are forgiven for our sins. Help us to learn to forgive ourselves and others so we all may know Your Peace. Help us to have the compassion for ourselves that we give to others so we may forgive ourselves where we have fallen short as friends, family members, workers, and members of the Body of Christ. Help us to give thanks each day for life and your compassionate care. We pray that each day we remember to keep our Hearts and Minds on You only, Lord, and when we do....that is a miracle day. Thank you, thank you, thank you for the daily miracles in our lives. Amen. Rev. Judith



Sacred Healing

May 8, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Exodus 7

8 *The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 9 "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake."*

....

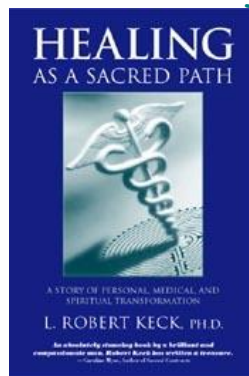
20 *Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. 21 The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.*

22 *But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. 23 Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart. 24 And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river.*

From Swedenborg:

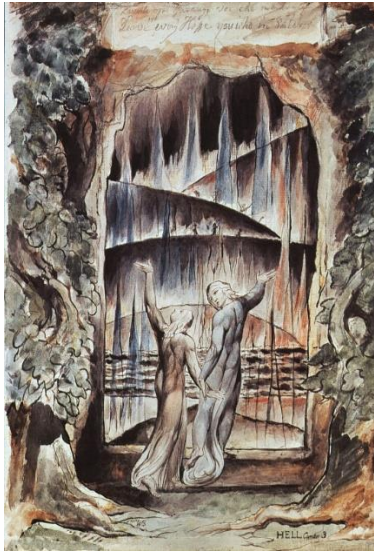
As regards miracles, it should be recognized that Divine miracles are as different from miracles involving the use of magic as heaven is from hell. Divine miracles spring from Divine Truth and take place in accordance with true order. Effects on lowest levels are miracles when it pleases the Lord that they should present themselves in that form. Thus it is that all Divine miracles represent states of the Lord's kingdom in heaven, and of the Lord's kingdom on earth, which is the Church. And this is the inward form that Divine miracles take. AC 7337

MESSAGE Sacred Healing



As a young boy, Bob Keck lived and breathed sports. He always knew that he would be an athlete. His love of sports was the very core of his soul; the fiber of his being. It was what he understood his "life's calling" to be. He was born in 1935, so grew up in the 1940's and 1950's in an Ozzie and Harriet kind of family. That was also an era when polio was a terrifying illness with no cure. It was especially devastating in children, sometimes leaving them paralyzed for life.

DESCENT INTO HELL



Bob was only 13 in 1948 when he contracted polio. In his book, he calls this experience his first descent into hell. The terrified boy had to spend 2 weeks in a hospital isolation ward, followed by two weeks of isolation at home. He was in intense physical pain, but far worse for him was the inner turmoil at the thought that his very identity would be extinguished if he couldn't return to playing sports.

IN HEAVEN

He fought hard and returned to his life as an athlete. He writes: "It did not take me long to rise from the hell of polio back to the athletic heaven." [p. 16].

By his senior year, he was again living happily in the world of high school sports. He was a crucial member of the team who led his teammates to many victories. Then the state championships were held. His high school was generally considered to be the 2nd best team in the state. In the first game of the championship, they had to play the team rated first. Bob and the team gave it their all; and they won! Bob had been instrumental in the win, and he was in heaven. Sadly, he was too excited and fatigued to sleep that night, so was unable to play well the next day when they faced a mediocre team. Bob's team lost the game. Bob was back in hell.

This was one of many lessons he would have about how his body had been weakened by childhood polio, and could not be pushed beyond its limits. However, he was not to be deterred, and returned to active playing. He was a brilliant athlete, and he brushed aside the bouts of pain and fatigue he had after games. He was widely sought by colleges for scholarships. He chose a small school in Vermont, where he could play all three of his beloved sports: baseball, basketball, and football.

His next descent into hell took place the summer before starting college. He worked as a wilderness guide for canoe trips. He carried a heavy backpack and canoe on his back as he hiked. He warned the clients with him to be very careful on a slippery slope. He did not heed his own advice, however, and plunged down a deep embankment; with a broken back when his

body crashed landed at the bottom of the ravine. He was rushed to a hospital, where x-rays were taken immediately. The doctor gave him and his parents the bad news: his back was broken in two places. The doctor speculated that the polio had weakened his vertebrae.

However, Bob did recover from the surgery and had considerable physical rehab. He began his freshman year and played sports at his college.

By the spring of 1957 he was ready to graduate college. He had two offers to play professional sports: the Yankees and the Colts. His dreams were being realized. One evening, while he was pondering his choice, he was invited to a worship service given by a visiting Methodist minister. He wasn't interested, but wanted to be polite. So he attended, sitting in the pew thinking about the Yankees and the Colts. That's when he had what he calls a "Soul Quake of Maximum Magnitude." Here are his own words:

Then it happened! In a split second, in a moment that will forever defy understanding or explanation, my life was totally changed. In the previous instant I was Bob Keck the athlete, just as I had been for the twenty-two previous years of my life – in the next instant I had an overwhelming knowing -- absolutely, completely, and without any doubt, that I was not going to be a professional athlete. My life was totally redirected, and the closest I can come to explaining the feeling of the "new me" is that I had experienced having every cell of my being infused with divine love, and I was now committed to the service of that love. Pp. 40-41.



Keck turned down both professional offers, and never looked back. Instead he entered seminary and became a Methodist minister. He had a full and productive life with parish work, social justice work, and handball tournaments. Then he descended again into hell.

In the late 1960's, he tried to do it all. On one particular spring week-end, he traveled back and forth between a handball tournament and parish duties. With intense pain and muscle cramping, he lapsed into unconsciousness. He awoke to terrible news: he had begun a decline into a lifetime of intense pain and probably having to be in a wheel chair.

He was devastated. Again, he felt his soul die.

My deepest soul self was back on death row with a terminal prognosis. Not only could I no longer be an athlete, but I would never be able to offer the kind of service I was committed to, or make the kind of contribution to love and social justice to which I felt spiritually called. P. 58

It was not yet understood that Bob was a victim of Post Polio Syndrome, an ailment that can strike polio victims years after their bout with the virus. It can cause severe pain, fatigue, and more muscle weakness for the rest of one's life. He became depressed and sunk into the deep pits of a "dark night of the soul." The dawn began when he had a dramatic dream about finding, in his basement, an "architect" who showed him the many rooms of his home that he had not yet seen.

In the months after that dream, he began to enter unexplored worlds of healing. He explored such non-Western modalities as hypnosis and meditation.

One day he was at a hypnosis conference, and practicing his meditative breathing. On his in breath, he imagined all of the pain in his body clustering in his lungs. Then on the out breath, the pain would leave his body. It was, of course, only in imagination that the pain would leave. He was totally unprepared for 80% of the pain to actually leave his body in one exhalation. It was like having his body hot and burning – and then jumping into a cool swimming pool.
Forever.

That was over 40 years ago. Bob has spent those years trying to understand healing and miracles. His study led him to reading Swedenborg and to being a visiting scholar at the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley.

As he gained in wisdom, he wrote:
"Miracle" is a legitimate word to use in our attempt to understand the mysterious healings that can and do occur. It is, however, not something conferred upon one from the outside, but something that breaks through from within, an awakening to the potential that was and is always there. Developing our awareness of that is part of the miracle. P. 120

Bob came to a conclusion that seems to echo Emanuel Swedenborg's words over 300 years ago.

Divine miracles spring from Divine Truth and take place in accordance with true order.

In other words, what we call "miracles" is simply the unfolding of God's universe as it was planned all along. Miracles are not something outside of ordinary reality. We simply do not understand reality deeply enough to see the miracles that were built into it by the original "Architect." The closer we can come to that understanding, the easier it is to be aware of the miracles that happen all the time; and to realize that they have always been "ordinary" events after all.



Keck illustrates this concept of miracles with a story that is attributed to Michelangelo. He was asked how he created such exquisite, breathtaking images out of cold, hard marble. Supposedly, Michelangelo's response was: *They were already in the marble. God put them there. I simply carved away the excess marble that kept you from seeing them.* P. 120.

That story demonstrates an important point that Swedenborg made about "miracles." God has put incredible gifts and healing abilities into our souls. We just need help "carving away" the excess that keeps us from seeing and using our inner gifts.

How does that resonate with your life? Are there times that you have seen your life as a "descent into hell" or a "dark night of the soul," only to discover deep healing afterwards? Are there times when you feel that you have much more healing ability inside of you than you can possibly imagine?

Keck's "miracle" took place in 1973. He has spent the years since exploring the world of prayer and of miracles. In next week's message, we'll look more in depth at what he has discovered during those years and how his wisdom might apply to our own lives.

This Week's Prayer

Prayer for the week of 5/7/11:

Holy Lord, as we go through the weeks ahead, focused on your healing nature, let us learn and understand healing. Help us to develop in surrendering to your will, understanding ill health, and learn the channels through which you heal our bodies, minds, and spirits. If it be your will, heal us so that we may be more energetic, healthy, and humble channels of your Love, Light, and Peace. Let us give to others as you have given to us. May all be Healed and Blessed in your name. Amen. [Rev. Judith](#)

Healing for Wholeness

May 15, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.

Gospel of Thomas 70: 1-2

From Swedenborg:

There is an inflow from God into us. The inflow comes into our souls because the soul is the inmost and highest part of us. TCR 8, NCE

MESSAGE

Healing for Wholeness

by Rev. Wilma

Bob Keck had polio when he was a child. He seemed to recover, but he always had some problems with fatigue and energy. He had a busy life as a minister, father, and social activist. He was only in his thirties when his health declined suddenly, and he was told to prepare for a lifetime of intense pain and, before long, a wheel chair. He didn't know then that he had something called "Post Polio Syndrome" that affected some adults who had had polio as children.

He was indeed in intense pain and felt great despair. In last week's message, we read about this event:

One day he was at a hypnosis conference, and practicing his meditative breathing. On his in breath, he imagined all of the pain in his body clustering in his lungs. Then on the out breath, the pain would leave his body. It was, of course, only in imagination that the pain would leave. He was totally unprepared for 80% of the pain to actually leave his body in one exhalation. It was like having his body hot and burning – and then jumping into a cool swimming pool. Forever.

It had taken Keck a long time to try alternative healing methods. He had always trusted Western medicine to have a cure, and thought of alternative methods as just imagination. Keck wasn't alone in that perspective; for generations that has been the prevalent view of both science and theology.

Keck's story of his healing experience brings the first part of his book to a close. His book is "*Healing as a Sacred Journey*." The first section is titled: "A Personal Story: to Hell and Back." The second part of the book is Keck's attempt to understand how medicine and mind had come to take such disparate paths. This week we'll explore what he wrote in the second part of his book, "The Medical Story: Past and Present."

He begins his second section with several quotes. Here's one of them:



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

Science and religion are not at opposite poles ..instead they form a continuum This interaction aims at serving the broader concerns of the global human and ecological communities.

This is a quote from Robert Russell, M.D.; Ph.D. He has a master's degree in theology and a doctorate in physics. He founded the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences in Berkeley. He is one of the strong forces today helping to bring science and theology into a relationship of wholeness.

In the Middle Ages, God was seen as the cause of all the events of the world. God worked in a highly personal way. If you lived a life pleasing to God, you would be rewarded with wealth and health. If you displeased God, then you would be poor and sick.

Christianity suffered a deep crisis of faith when the Bubonic Plague devastated Europe from 1347 to 1351. One-third of the population between India and Iceland was destroyed.

People of that time did not understand disease and germs; they saw all of this devastation as being sent by God as some kind of punishment. There was a deep crisis of faith. No one could understand God's reasoning. Many pious people perished, and some wicked people survived. Where was God? Was God really all-powerful?

In this faith crisis, the world moved through the Renaissance, the Reformation, then – in the 18th Century - into the Enlightenment. Emanuel Swedenborg's life overlapped the Enlightenment: he lived from 1668 to 1772.

The Enlightenment was a time when people began to give up superstitious beliefs about the causes of the events. Instead, the emerging sciences began to offer explanations for how the world worked.

With the development of the sciences, many thinkers began to polarize science and religion. Clearly, disease was caused by germs and physical ailments. One's faith and the power of one's mind were irrelevant. We started down a long slide of dualistic thinking, out of which evolved Western medical science.

Keck points out that Christianity played a major role in seeing the world as dualistic. The wholeness was divided: heaven and earth; divine and human; spirit and matter; science and religion.

One lone voice during this period of history was Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg was a brilliant Swedish scientist who had dramatic mystical experiences in his mid-fifties. Through his dream journal and his meditative breathing, he integrated his newly-found spirituality with his deeply-rooted rationalism. He claimed that our minds and our hearts are part of a wholeness that must be integrated. We are each part of a web, and live in relationship to all of the earth.

Swedenborg wrote:

Divine miracles spring from Divine Truth and take place in accordance with true order.

In other words, we needed both science and religion to understand life. God was at the center

of the universe, but God's creation functioned through the laws of science. Science IS God's divine order.

Swedenborg's perspective was widely derided in his own time. However, after his death, his ideas became increasingly popular and permeated Western culture. Many healing movements grew out of people influenced by Swedenborg. This includes homeopathy, New Thought, Christian Science, and New Age healing approaches.

During the coming weeks, we'll explore healers and healing movement that grew out of Swedenborg's holographic world view. He insisted that each of us is connected to all of us. This understanding of the world is essential to grasping many of today's alternative healing modalities.

In the coming weeks, we'll explore Swedenborgian ideas in Mesmerism, hypnosis, homeopathy, New Thought, and many other forms of healing.

Let us pray.

Prayer for the week of 5/15/11

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Heart is the indwelling home of the Lord. If the Heart is not right, the mind is not right, and the body follows those two. When we seek the Lord first in all things through prayer and meditation, we are able to overcome all things and we will dwell in the Spirit of The Lord no matter what happens in our bodies or lives. This is the ultimate healing in we humans and is from the Grace of the Lord.

Oh, Beloved Lord, dwelling in us always, we give thanks for your care each day, Give us the willingness to seek you first before we begin our day, knowing that you will guide us in your will for us that day. When we have negative thoughts of resentment, anger, judgement, self pity or revenge draw us back to you and give us the "right use" course to take. Help us to grow in your Spirit, and in compassion for ourselves and for others. When we face disease of the body, mind, or spirit pull us back to you, for it is in your Spirit that we find comfort and peace. AMEN. Rev. Judith



Holistic Healing: the Radical Roots

May 22, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Psalm 98

A psalm.

1 Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.

2 The LORD has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

3 He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to the house of Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

4 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;

5 make music to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,

6 with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—
shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

7 Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.

8 Let the rivers clap their hands,
Let the mountains sing together for joy; 9 let them sing before the LORD,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity.

From Swedenborg:

[3] Those that have applied the doctrinals of the church which are from the Word immediately to life, are in the inmost heaven, and surpass all others in their delights of wisdom. In every object they see what is Divine; the objects they see indeed with their eyes; but the corresponding Divine things flow in immediately into their minds and fill them with a blessedness that affects all their sensations. Thus before their eyes all things seem to laugh, to play, and to live (see above, n. 270). [*Heaven and Hell*, 489, 3]

MESSAGE

by Rev. Wilma

WHOLISTIC HEALING: THE RADICAL ROOTS
Part I: Emanuel Swedenborg



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

Do you see a common thread in these approaches to health? –

Christian Science
Chiropractic
Dr. Oz
faith-healing
Holistic healing
Homeopathy
New Age
New Thought
positive thinking
Spiritualism
utopian communities

It's likely that these are all branches of a tree that Emanuel Swedenborg helped to plant and get rooted over 300 years ago.

Our Sunday messages during the next few months will be on the theme of “Holistic Healing.” Many of the messages will draw information from a recent book published by the Swedenborg Foundation: *Swedenborg, Mesmer, & the Mind/Body Connection: The Roots of Complimentary Medicine*.

The author is Dr. John S. Haller Jr., emeritus professor of history and medical humanities at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He has written a numbers of books, especially on the history of medicine.

In this book, Haller is looking at both Emanuel Swedenborg [1688-1772] and Anton Mesmer [1734 – 1815] as possible roots of today's wholistic healing movements. Swedenborg was 46 years old when Mesmer was born, and Mesmer was 38 years old when Swedenborg died. So their lives overlapped for thirty-eight years.

Haller asks the question: How is it that they [Swedenborg & Mesmer] influenced so many different areas of thought and culture? Is there a direct correlation between Swedenborg and Mesmer and these [holistic healing] movements, or is it one of perception? ... The role of the paranormal in society is something that deserves more than an occasional footnote. ...

Particularly when studying the country's alternative healing systems, of which there were—and are—many, it is impossible to ignore the paranormal and its connections to both mesmerism and Swedenborgianism.

This week, we'll see what Haller has to say about Emanuel Swedenborg's impact on holistic healing. Next week, we'll look at Swedenborg's contemporary: Anton Mesmer.

Haller says of Swedenborg:

he has been viewed as a genius whose vision and visions were marks of seminal importance.⁴ Along with Leonardo da Vinci, he is one of the great geniuses known to the Western world, a man whose abilities crossed a multitude of disciplines—from science and mechanics
On the spiritual side, Swedenborg had no equal. Although many scientists have shown themselves to be deeply religious, none—with the possible exception of the mathematician, physicist, and religious philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662)—has been cited as a renowned mystic.

In the section below, there will be a review of Swedenborg's life. If you are familiar with it, you might want to skip it. If you don't much about his life, this will help you get a better understanding of the man.

SWEDENBORG'S CHILDHOOD

Emanuel was born in 1688; the 3rd child of Jesper Swedberg [1653-1735] and Sarah Behm.

Jesper was a Lutheran priest, who later became a Bishop and a faculty member at Uppsala University.

The boy Emanuel lived in a household filled with regular discussions on topics such as God, salvation, faith, science, politics, and philosophy. He learned to think, to discuss, and to question at a young age.

When Emanuel was four in 1692, Jesper became a professor of theology at the University of Uppsala. The university – and all of Europe – was embroiled in debate about Descartes, who presented a world view that split science and religion into entirely separate camps. Jesper, as a man of faith, was opposed to this new philosophy.

Emanuel's mother and a brother died in 1696 from an epidemic. His father provided him with a tutor who helped prepare him for the university. He began studies at Uppsala when he was 11. He majored in philosophy, a subject that included much science and math. He also took Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. At the time, it was not unusual for a bright boy to start at the university at a young age. However, Swedenborg was unusually bright and unusually young when he started college.

When Emanuel was 15, his father and stepmother moved with the younger children to Skara in central Sweden as Jesper was appointed a Bishop. Emanuel and the other children lived with their sister Anna and her husband Dr. Erik Benzelius, the librarian of the University and professor of theology. He lived with them for 6 years, and was strongly influenced by Benzelius, who was a strong advocate of Cartesian dualism. 300-315

In 1710, at the age of twenty-two, Swedenborg traveled extensively, especially in Great Britain. He met with many of the great thinkers of his time, including hearing the lectures of Sir Isaac Newton. He was fascinated with the technology of his day and managed to design a submarine, canal locks, ear trumpets, an airplane, and a musical instrument – plus many other things. He explored lens grinding, mineralogy, metallurgy, geology, and chemistry. 340-354

In 1716 he was appointed as assessor extraordinary to the Board of Mines, a government group that inspected mines. It was an honor to have this appointment. Swedenborg threw himself into the work, and remained there for 31 years.

Emanuel was briefly engaged, but his intended did not return his affections, so he released her from the commitment. Apparently he never married or had a serious romantic relationship. 358-371

Starting in 1734, Swedenborg pulled away from his purely scientific work to trying to understand the soul. 510-515 He felt that the soul was in the brain, so he did considerable research on the brain and the nervous system.

As a child, Swedenborg had practiced a form of controlled breathing, which he felt contributed to his mystical experiences. As he began his search for soul, he returned to this spiritual practice. (Kindle Locations 706-710)

DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Swedenborg had a spiritual crisis, a dark night of the soul, in 1745.

Described in his *Spiritual Experiences* (published posthumously), he heard a male voice telling him not to eat too much, followed by a vision in which a vapor was expelled from his body and turned to tiny worms, which then burned before his eyes.⁷ Following this event, he professed to

have had his senses opened directly into the spirit world, allowing him to converse with angels and devils, from whom he came to have a new understanding of Scripture. This privilege, which began in his fifty-seventh year ... and lasted more than twenty-seven years. During this period of his life he addressed the nature of heaven and hell, regeneration, correspondences, faith, charity, marriage, the nature of God, the nature of evil, divine providence, and free will. He likewise claimed to pass along messages from the dead received during visits to heaven and, also while traveling in the spiritual realms, to have conversed with the inhabitants of Mercury and Jupiter ... 790-799

Eventually, Swedenborg's meditations morphed into a hypnologic state of dreams and waking visions. Swedenborg kept track of his dreams in a notebook (1743-1744) 824-827).

He believed that he was invited to visit heaven while still alive on the earth. He was able to converse with all of the spirits and angels residing there, and much of his writing is based on these conversations. 873-885

Swedenborg believed he had a calling to help people understand the deeper meanings found in the Bible.

SWEDENBORG'S THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

In 1747, at the age of fifty-nine, Swedenborg resigned from the Board of Mines and returned to London, where he began writing and publishing his major theological work, *Secrets of Heaven* (*Arcane Celestial*).

From 1749 to 1756, eight volumes were eventually published, amounting to more than 4,500 pages. Thus began the author's theological phase, in which he wrote commentary upon the books of the Old and New Testaments and carried on a dual existence in both the natural world and his new spiritual world of communing spirits. *Secrets of Heaven* constituted a spiritual exposition of Genesis and Exodus, plus descriptions of his visionary experiences of heaven and hell. [907-919]

Swedenborg's *Secrets of Heaven* and *Heaven and Hell* were followed by nearly twenty other publications, including *Divine Love and Wisdom* (1763), *Divine Providence* (1764), *Apocalypse Revealed* (1766), *Marriage Love* (1768), and *True Christianity* (1771).

His works were widely read, and eventually he ran into difficulty with the Lutheran Church. A group of clergy went through his writings to compare his writings with the teachings of the Church. His theology was found to be corrupting, heretical, injurious, and in the highest degree objectionable. In 1770, two years before his death, a ruling was made that Lutheran clergy were not to utilize his writings in any way. Swedenborg appealed to the King, who ordered more study of his works in universities. There was resistance to doing this, and things were still stuck when he died in 1772. His book, *True Christianity*, published in 1771 was an attempt to explain his theology in terms common in the Christian church.

So what about Emanuel Swedenborg made him such a major influence on holistic healing movements? Haller does not specifically give us the answer to this question, and it is something we need to consider and discuss. I suggest the following doctrines as central to holistic healing:

THE DIVINE AS LOVE AND WISDOM

The Divine – that which we call “God” is pure love and energy that is constantly flowing into us; and into everything that exists. God is ONLY love and wisdom. God is never punishing or vengeful. God is all that is love or works towards doing good in the world. This energy is always working towards our wholeness, and we can work with it or try to block it. The more we embrace it, the deeper we can experience wholeness in our life.

This brings healing into a dimension far beyond what a physical medical approach can do. But it doesn't make such an approach irrelevant. All aspects of physical healing are instruments for the divine flow.

CORRESPONDENCES

The Divine “inflows” to everything that exists, so that everything has a connection with the Divine. Whatever happens in the natural world is deeply embedded in the Divine, so has a spiritual significance. We can use every event of our lives as a pathway to deeper connection and healing. There is nothing that cannot be used to bring us into greater closeness with the Divine.

Haller explains this crucial concept this way:

Knowledge of the doctrine of correspondences explained the relation between the natural world and the spiritual world, and of the laws that governed them. Based not upon poetic fancy but upon reality, it was one of the more beautiful truths in Swedenborg's theology, as it enabled people to find the spiritual sense of the world for themselves. It was how revelation of the Word was received and taught. It existed to enable individuals to see with their own eyes that which God had revealed and on which they could rely. It was the relation that existed from creation between the effects in the natural world and their efficient causes in the spiritual world. 1021-1037

This is a concept that we will return to in many ways as we trace how it has impacted holistic healing movements.

ANGELS:

Angels are all human beings who lived on the earth. There is not a separate class of higher beings; nor is there a separate “devil.” There are human beings who make free will choices to live in loving ways – or hateful ways – during their time on earth. They continue to make decisions after death as to how they want to live in the spiritual world.

This means that there are countless loving beings that are available to help guide us and heal us in our life's struggles. We can utilize their wisdom and help in our own needs for healing.

This also means that there is no “devil” intent on bringing bad things into our lives.

The world was created in such a way that every experience, every encounter we have can serve a spiritual purpose. Human beings can choose to ignore the Divine and do evil things. However, it is impossible to cut off the constant inflow of Love. That means that God is never the author of evil and God never punishes. But we can find God's love working at all times in all places, and it is always available to help us move towards wholeness.

Much of our exploration in the coming months will be taking the “theoretical” and understanding how it impacts our daily living.

To what extent do you understand these concepts as being at the core of your life?

When do you turn towards Divine Love in your own journey towards wholeness, and when do you ignore its help?

If you are/consider yourself a Swedenborgian: How do you connect modern wholistic approaches with your faith tradition? Have you realized how deeply intertwined they are? Your/our faith tradition is at the very core of modern holistic healing movements.

If you're a casual reader of Swedenborg, or new to Swedenborgianism, you may be discovering connections that you hadn't known about.

The journey ahead will help us understand how these basic doctrines have been expressed in many different aspects of holistic healing.

Let us pray.

Prayer for the week of 5/22/11

Today is Armed Forces Day, and it reminds me to be grateful for our people in uniform and our veterans.

Recently Mrs. Michelle Obama began an initiative called "Joining Forces". She requested that all those people who wanted to assist our returning troops and veterans to begin to help support them at the local level. What an incredible service to volunteer at a VA hospital, or donate food and clothing to the families of our deployed service-people, or start a baby-sitting service like some grandmothers in one area did. I encourage you to help where you can, anywhere you can.

Our Heavenly Father Mother God in the weeks ahead keep us focused on you and purpose we have in life. Let us share our talents, and do your will in every situation that comes up. Fill us with Love for our Neighbors. Keep us full of gratitude for our very lives, the roof over our head, the clothes on our backs, the food that we eat and the family and friends we have. There are those that have none of these things. How plentiful our land and lives are when we focus on what we do have and the opportunities that you give us dear Lord. Thank you for your Light filling Love and Comfort. Let us be true servants of your will and guide our every step. Amen.
Rev. Judith



Mesmer, Hypnosis, and Influx

May 29, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

John 14 & 15

10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves....

20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

From Swedenborg:

TC 8 There is an inflow from God into us. ...This inflow comes into our souls because the soul is the inmost and highest part of us. The inflow from God reaches that part first and then comes down into the things below and enlivens them, depending on our openness to what flows in. What is meant by spiritual influx cannot be better seen than by means of the natural influxes which take place and appear in this world—as by the influx of heat from the sun into all things of the earth. H.S. 6190

MESSAGE

by Rev. Wilma

WHOLISTIC HEALING: THE RADICAL ROOTS

Part II: Anton Mesmer

Have you ever been hypnotized? If not, do you know anyone who has benefited from hypnosis? People have successfully used hypnosis to stop smoking, to reduce pain, to prepare for surgery, and to recall details of the past [especially those buried in trauma].

Do you know the roots of hypnosis? The concepts of hypnosis are generally credited to Dr. Anton Mesmer, which is why hypnotic techniques were first called "Mesmerism." Late in Swedenborg's life, and after his death in 1772, many of his followers explored the work of Anton Mesmer in what was then called "[animal magnetism](#)." Some Swedenborgians felt that in Mesmer, they had found another version of Divine influx; but with God left out of the picture. Other Swedenborgians saw Mesmer's "invisible tides" as dangerous quackery.

In the coming weeks, we'll be exploring the world of healing; from Swedenborg to the present. Swedenborg and Mesmer had an incredible impact on generations of healers. At first, countless healers were reading Swedenborg and attending lectures about "animal magnetism." These healers absorbed the ideas, and then developed even more approaches to healing. Examples of healing we'll be exploring are homeopathy, and the streams of "New Thought" healing that were inspired by the amazing healer, Phineas Quimby.

The story of Swedenborg is told in last week's message. Today, we'll look at Anton Mesmer.



Swedenborgian
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Love, Spirit, Life

Mesmer was born in 1734, at Lake Boden in Germany. He studied theology, philosophy, and law in Vienna at Jesuit Universities. Then in 1759 he went to the University of Vienna to become a physician. His doctoral dissertation was “On the Influence of the Moon and the Planets on the Human Body” which was based on Newton’s theories of tides. Mesmer felt that there were tides in the human body that were influenced by the sun and moon. However, it does seem that his dissertation was plagiarized from Richard Mead, a physician and friend of Newton.

In 1766 he received his medical degree, and In January of 1768, Mesmer married Anna Maria von Posch, a wealthy widow, and set up a medical practice in Vienna, Austria. In the summers, he was able to reside on a luxurious estate, and to become a patron of the arts. In fact, he is said to have sponsored a performance of a controversial 12 year old; Wolfgang Mozart.

In 1774 [2 years after the death of Swedenborg], Mesmer was exploring his theory that magnets could help balance the flow of “tides” in the human body. He took [plagiarized] this theory from Father Maximillian Hell, a Jesuit healer, who used a magnetized steel plate to bring about cures. Mesmer felt that Hell’s cures worked because the fluids in the body were magnetic. When they got out of balance, the person got sick. So using a magnet to restore balance would bring health.

Here is a description of his technique:

Mesmer used an apparatus which he called a bacquet, an oak tub filled with iron filings and broken glass. Protruding from the wooden top were dozens of bottles with the necks pointing in the direction of the patients. Placed inside the bottles were many iron rods whose purpose, according to Mesmer's theories, was to spray magnetic rays on the subject. These bottles were filled with supposedly magnetized water.

The patients gathered round the baquet, each holding the hand of the patient on either side, the whole party forming a kind of "magnetic ring." Ethereal soft music would play and the lights dimmed. Some of the patients would start singing during these strange séances. Inevitably, a few patients experienced spasms or a "crisis" after which they would emerge from the experience feeling improved in health. Occasionally young aristocratic women would return for the pleasure of the experience even though they no longer had any medical condition to treat.

Eventually, he came to believe that the magnets were not necessary for the cure. He felt that a rapport between physician and client was essential. He developed a technique of asking the patient to sit quietly, and he would wave his arms around the patient. He subtly suggested that something dramatic was about to happen in the patient’s healing, and it often did.

In 1775, Mesmer was asked for his opinion on the exorcisms performed by priest and healer Johann Joseph Gassner. Mesmer said that the healings had nothing to do with Gassner’s beliefs, but rather came about because of Gassner’s strong “animal magnetism.”

In 1775, Mesmer moved to Paris and set up his office in a wealthy part of the city. People were divided on whether he was a quack who had forced out of Vienna, or a genius who had made great discoveries about healing.

One respected physician did decide to study with Mesmer: Dr. Charles D’Eslon (1739–1786), physician to the king's brother. He wanted to test Mesmer’s approaches against more traditional medicine.

D’Eslon invited members of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris to Mesmer’s fashionable clinique at the Hôtel de Bullion on the Rue Coq-Héron. There, amid private living quarters, plush offices, and the relaxing atmosphere of woods and lakes, Mesmer had

constructed an oaken tub or baquet that stored “magnetic fluid” (ground glass and iron filings covered in water). During the course of treatment, the tub was connected to iron rods and cords held in patients’ hands or placed on their bodies. Treating the body as a battery, Mesmer sought to restore proper flow by directing the electrical fluid contained in the baquet into the patient using a combination of touch, laying on of hands, and the passing of a wand above the individual or diseased part. Although the effort to present his ideas before the Faculty of Medicine failed because of his novel departure from accepted practices, Mesmer did succeed in raising the attention of the general public and the more fashionable among the nobility. So successful was his triumph that in 1781 he was offered a sizable pension from the government provided he reveal the secrets of his treatment. Mesmer chose instead to use his popularity to promote a secret organization known as the Société de l’Harmonie Universelle (Society for Universal Harmony), which spread from Paris to the provinces of Lyon, Strasbourg, Bayonne, Montpellier, Dijon, Nantes, Marseille, Bordeaux, and Lausanne ...

[HALLER, JOHN S. (2011). SWEDENBORG, MESMER, AND THE MIND/BODY CONNECTION (Kindle Locations 1516-1528). Swedenborg Foundation Publishers. Kindle Edition.]

In 1784, King Louis XVI appointed four members of the Faculty of Medicine to investigate animal magnetism as practiced by Mesmer and d’Eslon. The then appointed four members of the Royal Academy of Sciences: chemist Antoine Lavoisier, the physician Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, the astronomer Jean Sylvain Bailly, and the American ambassador Benjamin Franklin. The commission conducted a series of experiments aimed, not at determining whether Mesmer’s treatment worked, but whether he had discovered a new physical fluid. The commission concluded that there was no evidence for such a fluid. Whatever benefit the treatment produced was attributed to “imagination”.

Abbe Faria an Indo-Portuguese monk in Paris contemporary of Mesmer emphasized that “nothing comes from the magnetizer; everything comes from the subject and takes place in his imagination i.e., autosuggestion generated from within the mind”.

Mesmer was largely discredited after this and spent the rest of his life in obscurity. He died in 1815.

Many practioners, however, continued to use his theory in some form. It was called “artificial somnambulism and even a new term, “hypnosis”.

In an article, “Somnambulism and Animal Magnetism” in 1833 in the *New Jerusalem magazine* noted that many Swedenborgians were exploring these movements.

Louis Ogden was an Episcopalian who saw a demonstration of “magnetic somnambulism” in 1840. She was extremely impressed. Soon afterwards she began reading Swedenborg. She was convinced of the similarities between the two, and became a Swedenborgian.

The young Baltimore Society was embroiled in conflict on the issue in the 1790’s; with Robert Carter convinced it was evil and others finding it similar to Swedenborg. The issue continued to fascinate and divide Swedenborgians into the 1800’s.

What are their differences?

Both Mesmer and Swedenborg posited invisible energies that flowed through both living and non-living things. To Swedenborg, this was “inflow”; the very essence of the Divine. To Mesmer, this was a natural phenomenon. For many Swedenborgians, that was a minor technicality, and many of them were involved in early practices based on Mesmerism.

Influx is an extremely basic concept of Swedenborg’s. It is the basis for a wholistic, holographic

universe. The same Divine flows into all things. Its energy is less in non-living matter, but it still exists. This inflow unites all things. For Swedenborg, the inflow was a basis for healing. The more we open ourselves to this loving inflow, the more we can achieve wholeness on all levels.

Let us pray.

Prayer for the week of 5/29/11.

I've been thinking about change. Many of us today are facing change on all levels of our lives. One of my favorite prayers for all situations is The Serenity Prayer because it reminds me to trust God in all things. Here it is in it's complete form. Keep a copy with you in your pocket for emergencies.

God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference,

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.

Taking as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;

Trusting that He will make all things
right if I surrender to his will;

That I may be reasonably happy
in this life,
And supremely happy with Him
forever in the next.
- Reinhold Neibuhr

Love,
Rev. Judith



Swedenborgians & Spiritualists

June 5, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

The Darkness Turns to Light

19 When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? 20 Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. 21 Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. 22 Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

Isaiah 8, New International Version

From Swedenborg:

Talking with spirits is rarely allowed nowadays, though, because it is dangerous.^a The spirits then actually know that they are with us, which otherwise they would not; and evil spirits by nature harbor a murderous hatred for us and crave nothing less than our total destruction, body and soul. This is what actually goes on in people who regularly lose themselves in delusions, even to the point that they lose touch with the pleasures appropriate to their natural person.

There are some people who lead solitary

MESSAGE

by [Rev. Wilma](#)

Swedenborgians & Spiritualists: Andrew Jackson Davis

This sermon is part of series on [Swedenborg and Healing](#). It is inspired by and largely based on the book by John S Haller, Jr.: [Swedenborg, Mesmer, & the Mind/Body Connection: the Roots of Complementary Medicine](#) published by the Swedenborg Foundation.

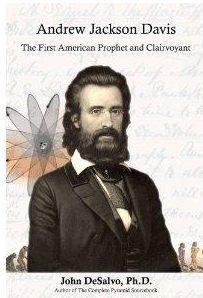
Late in Swedenborg's life, and after his death in 1772, many Swedenborgians became involved in the work of Anton Mesmer. New Swedenborgian groups in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain were popping up through the 1800's and one of the topics of debate was "Mesmerism" or "Animal Magnetism." These are basically what we call "hypnosis" today. Some Swedenborgians felt that in Mesmer that found a practical healing modality that expressed Swedenborg's theology. Other Swedenborgians felt that Mesmer was quite different from Swedenborg – esp. in his lack of a Divine focus.

A major figure in the merging of Swedenborgians and Mesmerists – and the emerging Spiritualists - in North America - was a trance medium named Andrew Jackson Davis [1826 to 1910]. He inspired a well-known trance medium who followed him: Edgar Cayce. [1877-1945].



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The Davis library collection now resides with the Edgar Cayce Library. Cayce's son Hugh Lynn read Edgar a sketchy account of Davis' life and work, and Edgar Cayce observed, "He sounds so much like me it gives me the creeps." [Thomas Sugrue, *There is a River*, 1942].



John DeSalvo has written the most recent book on Andrew Jackson Davis.

It wasn't his initial topic. He was researching a book on Abraham Lincoln's interest in spiritualism. He came across a source that said Lincoln at one time had a consultation with trance medium Andrew Jackson Davis. DeSalvo was never able to confirm that, but he began to research the life of Davis. This is fascinating tidbit to ponder: Did Abraham Lincoln consult a trance medium who was closely connected

with a number of Swedenborgians?

We will probably never know. But there does seem to be a large body of material about Lincoln's interest in Spiritualism. [[Links for more information.](#)]

[Life of Andrew Jackson Davis](#)



Andrew Jackson Davis was raised as a Presbyterian in Dutchess County, NY. He began having spiritual experiences in childhood. He would occasionally sleepwalk and hear voices. One day, when he was about seven, he ran out of his cottage exploding in anger over some incident. He heard a voice say: "Why, Jackson!" He went inside and found it was not his mother's voice. As he grew older, his encounters with the voice increased. When he was thirteen and begging for food, he heard: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." So, he began selling yeast and made some money for the family.

His mother died in 1838, and Andrew moved with his father to Poughkeepsie, where he was apprenticed to a shoe maker.

When Davis was seventeen years old [in 1843], he attended a lecture series on Animal Magnetism [Mesmerism]. Davis, with a number of other folks, was "mesmerized" [hypnotized] by the lecturer. He was fascinated with the experience, and after the lecture series decided to try some experiments with a tailor named William Levingston. They discovered that in a trance state, Davis could read books while blindfolded, and he could diagnose disease and recommend treatment. [Davis had no formal education, and had only read a handful of books in his life.] As they became increasingly popular, Davis and Levingston traveled around for over a year doing healings.

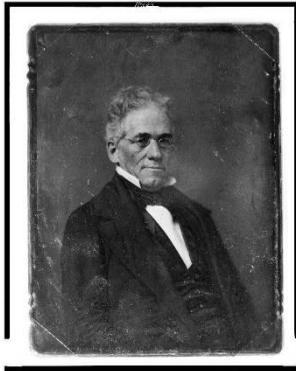
[Davis and Swedenborg](#)

On March 6, 1844, Davis went into his usual clairvoyant state, but then had difficulty shaking the trance. In his room he fell asleep, but then was awakened by a voice telling him to get dressed and then follow him to a cemetery. Davis saw a spirit there who lectured him on the many ways people of the earth were violating natural laws. Davis later realized this spirit was Galen, the

ancient Greek physician. This figure gave Davis a magical staff that represented the correspondence between Galen's medical system and nature.

Then Davis realized that there was a second figure in the cemetery who was a man of great intellect and spirituality. The spirit said to him, "Thou hast become an appropriate vessel for the influx and perception of truth and wisdom By thee will a new light appear?" Later, Davis realized that this spirit was Emanuel Swedenborg. Soon afterwards, he claimed that he again encountered Swedenborg who gave him the letters "A.C." and then a series of numbers.

Prof. George Bush



Davis was instructed to send these numbers to a Professor George Bush, a professor of Hebrew at the University of New York. Bush had explored Mesmerism and through it found and joined the Swedenborgian Church. He was enthusiastic about Davis and felt that he had, in fact, been given a commission by Swedenborg. Bush also validated that Davis could speak Hebrew and read Arabic and Sanskrit in a trance state.

[Bush was actually the brother of Timothy Bush, the great-great-great-grandfather of our former President.]

In 1846, for 15 months, Davis dictated a book based on his trance revelations, that included very sophisticated scientific and medical information. This book, *Principles of Nature*, was published in 1847. He was 21 years old at the time, and became known as the "Poughkeepsie Seer."

In 1847 Prof. Bush's wrote a book: *Mesmer and Swedenborg* to show that Swedenborg's theology explains Mesmerism and that Mesmerism demonstrates Swedenborg's principles.

Mesmerism's demonstrations of mental communications between one spirit and another gave validation to Swedenborg's claim to have held conversations with the spiritual world" and taken in conjunction with the revelations of Swedenborg, "open a new chapter in the philosophy of the mind and in man's relation to a higher sphere.

The book itself intrigued many Swedenborgians, but they were appalled by Appendix A, which was about Andrew Jackson Davis as a clairvoyant continuing the work of Swedenborg. *The New Jerusalem Magazine* gave a scathing review of Bush's book. They wrote:

...the contents affect us painfully and fully justify the regret we felt that through the writings of Prof. Bush so much currency had been given to the opinion that these lectures of David have some important connection with the writings of Swedenborg.

The magazine went on to warn readers not to take Bush's opinion as representing that of the Church of the New Jerusalem. They pointed out that Davis saw the Lord as merely a man who was a great reformer and that Davis denied the sanctity of the Word. They wished ***the writings and claims of Swedenborg may be entirely separated from the ravings of Davis, and of all other unprepared intruders ... into the confines of the spiritual world.***

Bush seemed to want to get back in favor with other Swedenborgians so he wrote a pamphlet with B.F. Barrett, *Davis' Revelations Revealed*. In it, Bush took back his endorsement of Davis. Two months later the pamphlet was reviewed by the *New Jerusalem Magazine*. They were

critical that Bush and Barrett held Davis in high regard, but they were pleased that Bush had acknowledged that Davis' teachings were not Swedenborgian.

After he left the academic world, Bush was a leader in the Brooklyn Society. He left in 1852, and Richard DeCharms – a Swedenborgian highly critical of all aspects of spiritualism, spent the summer preaching to the worshippers on the difference between Mesmer and Swedenborg!

Later in life Davis became active in movements to create a better society which also included spirit communication. He called his ideas *harmonial philosophy*. Davis became attracted to a popular medical philosophy called "*eclecticism*." It grew out of Native American healing practices, and integrating them with Western Medicine. Some medical colleges were being staffed by trained physicians who also used herbal and other treatment. Davis attended one of these colleges and got a medical license. Soon afterwards, the AMA came into existence and colleges that used herbal medicine were closed down. However, Davis retired to Boston and opened a small book shop where he prescribed herbal cures. He died in 1910; the same year the new AMA issued a report which led to the closing of medical schools that used herbal medicine.

Similarities between Davis and Swedenborg:

Both claimed to receive guidance from visiting the heavenly realms. Davis went into a trance state. Early on, he needed a mesmerist to guide him into it, and he emerged with no memory of the experience. He published what was produced in his trances almost verbatim. Swedenborg said he did not go into trance, and he greatly edited his works before publication. For Davis, and many trance mediums who followed him, there was a demarcation between human and divine. When conscious, Davis spoke as an uneducated human being. In unconscious trance, higher truth can emerge. Swedenborg was much more of a partner with the Lord in the books he wrote. He spent time both in trance and in regular consciousness, but he was a partnership between his human self and the Divine.

Differences between Davis and Swedenborg:

Swedenborg said that both spirit and matter were real, although spirit was of a higher nature than matter. Swedenborg's theology contains a strong element of "evil" that comes from the free will of human beings, some of whom could continue to choose hell for eternity. Davis said there was no hell; only levels of heaven or "Summerland." Davis and Swedenborg have some major similarities. They both engage in spirit communication, they both talk about correspondences and conjugal love. However, I see Davis as more like Mesmer than Swedenborg. Like Mesmer, Davis is not grounded in a strong theological connection with the Divine.

In many ways, it doesn't really change their teachings. However, in other ways, it makes them very different. I think for Davis and people influenced by him, there was a strong interest in spirit communication for its own sake. Swedenborg only valued the communication if one was guided by the Lord, and used the experience to become closer to God and of greater service to others.

Davis, and much of the later "positive thinking" movements, didn't have the concept of evil that Swedenborg had. Davis saw only a happy Summerland in the afterlife; there was no confronting the crucial choices between good and evil. Davis and the other Spiritualists who

followed him tended to see spirit communication as a really positive experience in which one received happy messages from kindly spirits. Swedenborg was very clear that there IS a hell filled with evil spirits, and these spirits are all around. Swedenborg cautioned against others exploring spirit communication, in that it could lead to relationships with lower-level entities.

Earlier this spring, we explored the world of evil and hell as we experience them on earth. This was essential to Swedenborg, and perhaps important to grasp BEFORE looking at spirit communication. Spirit communication, without a clear concept of evil, and a clear focus on guidance from the Lord, could be very dangerous.

A Swedenborgian conclusion to this topic is to continue to look to the Lord for guidance in all things. Learn to hear the loving angels around you, and open your heart to them. Let them keep you close to the Divine and protect you from the evil in both this world and the next.

Let us pray.

"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its troubles.
It empties today of its strength."

Author: unknown

Beloved Lord, dwelling within all things, strengthen us with your love and light. Give us the understanding of your ways and show us how to care for ourselves, our families and our homes. Keep us from worry and fear. Give us the grace of Charity to our neighbors in these times of struggle and strife in our world. Help us to be more generous with our tithes, our time, our talents and our treasure. Thank you for each and everyday we have been given to live on this beautiful planet. Let us always remember to put You first in all that we do, Praying for Your Wisdom before each action. With deepest gratitude from our hearts.
AMEN.

WITH LOVE AND BLESSINGS TO EACH ONE OF YOU.

[Rev. Judith](#)



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Happy Birthday, New Church!

June 19, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

John 14:1-4

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God[a]; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

From Swedenborg:

True Christianity, #772

That this second coming of the Lord does not take place for the purpose of destroying the visible heaven and habitable earth, has been shown in the preceding section. That it is not for the purpose of destroying anything, but to build up, consequently not to condemn but to save those who since His first coming have believed in Him and also those who may hereafter believe in Him, is evident from these words of the Lord.

MESSAGE

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, NEW CHURCH



Helen arrived at the mall's food court before her friend Sally; so she sat down, dropped her packages on an empty chair, and ordered tea. Moments later, she saw Sally pushing her baby's stroller and balancing



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bags of purchases. Sally smiled and waved. She came over and collapsed on the chair next to Helen.



"Whew," Sally said, "I've had so many things to pick up today; I'm so glad we planned to have tea this afternoon. It's going to be a long day; this evening we're going to a celebration at church."

"Yeah? What are you celebrating?" Helen asked.

"New Church Day."

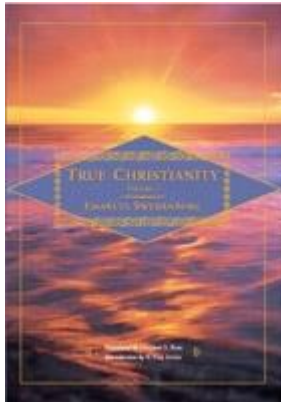
"What's that?"

"Well, it's a celebration of the birthday of our church: June 19, 1770."

"Really? I didn't know your church had a specific start day. I'd love to hear that story."

The tea arrived, and the women began sipping.

"OK. Here's the story. 1770 was late in Swedenborg's life; he died in 1772. He had just finished writing his 2-volume True Christianity. He was told that the Second Coming happened in heaven that day."

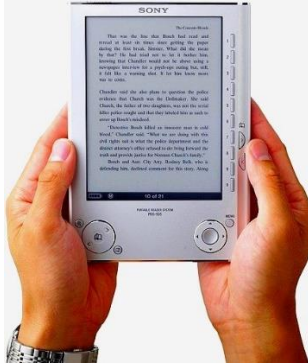


"Oh, come on! 2nd Coming! I know my church is pretty fundamentalist from your perspective. We have really clear doctrine on the 2nd Coming. Jesus will come back to earth and there will be a final judgment with the believers going the heaven. Others will be left behind – like in those books."

"Well, that is the traditional Christian approach, of course; Swedenborg was quite adamant that it was wrong."

Sally pulled out her eBook reader, on which had all of the books of Swedenborg in digital format, to find

her favorite quotes:



The prevailing opinion in the churches at the present day is, that when the Lord shall come for the last judgment, He will appear in the clouds of heaven with angels and the sound of trumpets; will gather together all who still dwell on the earth, together with all who have died; will separate the wicked from the good, as a shepherd separates the goats from the sheep; will then cast the wicked or the goats into hell, and will raise the good or the sheep into heaven; and at the same time will create a new visible heaven and a new habitable earth, and will send down upon that earth the city called the New Jerusalem; ...also that into that city will be gathered all the elect, both those who are still alive and those who have died since the beginning of the world; that these will then return into their bodies, and in that magnificent city, as their heaven, will enjoy eternal blessedness. This is the prevailing opinion in the Christian churches of today respecting the Lord's coming and the last judgment. {True Christian Religion, #768}

"Yeah, that's pretty much what we believe," Helen mused.

"And also that one doesn't rise up till the judgment?"

"Yes, of course that's how it will be," Helen asserted. Sally pulled up another quote on her ebook reader.



Another cause of such a belief in the man of the church is that he believes that no one can go to heaven or hell before the time of the last judgment; of which he has conceived this opinion that the visible world is then to perish, and a new one will come into existence, and that then the soul will return into its body, and from their conjunction man will again live a man. This belief involves another about the angels, that they were created from the beginning; for it is impossible to believe that heaven and hell are from the human race, when it is believed that no man goes there till the end of the world.

"OK. I get that Last Judgement happened in 1747. But I don't get how the Second Coming took place in 1770?"

"After Swedenborg finished True Christian Religion, he was told that Jesus was sending out the



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disciples.

Jesus was coming into everyone's heart and now is inside for all of us."

791. Note: After this work was finished the Lord called together his twelve disciples who followed him in the world; and the next day he sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages ...

This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770. This is what is meant by these words of the Lord:

He shall send his angels and they shall gather together his elect, from the end of the heavens to the end thereof (Matt. 24:31).

"That doesn't make sense!" Helen exclaimed. "The 2nd Coming is about separating the true Christians from all others. It can't happen till when the Final Judgment comes."

"See, Swedenborg separates the Final Judgment from the Second Coming. The final judgment was in 1747. Then June 19, 1770 was the Second Coming. Here listen to this" Sally found another quote on her ebook reader.

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That this second coming of the Lord does not take place for the purpose of destroying the visible heaven and habitable earth has been shown in the preceding section. That it is not for the purpose of destroying anything, but to build up, consequently not to condemn but to save those who since His first coming have believed in Him and also those who may hereafter believe in Him ...

"Swedenborg says it's not about being Christian in the traditional sense – or any particular religion – it's about living with this love inside of us. It was the start of a whole new concept of church – a way of living together that was about doing good; not about what one believed. All of those who strive to live with love, regardless of belief, are part of a new concept of church – a 'New Church.'"

"Oh. So that's why you folks call yourselves the 'New Church'. I thought 'New Church' was just another church."

"Oh, no," that's not what Swedenborg meant. It's sort of post-church. It's beyond the concept of there being different religions. It's people living together based on loving action; not separating themselves by what they believe."

"So Swedenborg said this New Church started on June 19?"

"Yes; it started in heaven. We have a long way to go on earth. But it's part of his concept of the New Jerusalem; heaven on earth; where people are united by how they live; not what they believe."

790. What this church is to be is fully described in Revelation, where the end of the former church and the beginning of the new are treated of. This new church is described by the new Jerusalem, by its magnificence, and by its being the future bride and wife of the lamb (19:7; 21:2, 9). Besides these I will cite only the following quotation from Revelation. When the new Jerusalem was seen descending from heaven it was said:

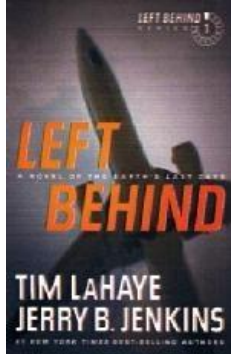
Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples; himself shall be with them, their God. And the nations that are saved shall walk in the light of it; and there shall be no night there. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let them come. And he that wisheth,



let him take the water of life freely. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen (Rev. 21:3, 24–25; 22:16–17, 20).

"That's so different from my tradition. I was raised that the Second Coming is where only true Christians are saved. Everyone else is 'left behind.'"

"I know. That's what made Swedenborg so different. He rejected some of the basic concepts of Christianity; and said that being saved isn't about belief – it's about how we live our lives day by day."



774. The Lord's presence is unceasing with every man, both the evil and the good, for without His presence no man lives; but His Coming is only to those who receive Him, who are such as believe on Him and keep His commandments. The Lord's unceasing presence causes man to become rational, and gives him the ability to become spiritual. This is effected by the light that goes forth from the Lord as the sun in the spiritual world, and that man receives in his understanding; for the heat that goes forth from that same sun is love to God and love toward the neighbor. [the 2nd coming], may be likened to presence of solar light in the world; unless this light is joined with heat all things on earth become desolate. But the coming of the Lord may be likened to the coming of heat, which takes place in spring; because heat then joins itself with light ...

"Swedenborg's view of the 2nd coming is like receiving the light of the sun. For those who open their hearts to receive this loving light it is like a spring day with flowers blossoming. This is the 2nd coming. It did happen, is happening, and will always be happening. We do not need to believe any particular thing; we only need to open our hearts to the love, and share it with others.....Look, here's an interesting book on my eBook reader: [The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation](#) by Barbara R. Rossing. [New York: Basic Books; a member of the Perseus Book Groups, 2004]. She writes:

Jesus never asked of God to 'Beam me up' from the earth, nor can we. ... God saves us not by snatching us out of the world, but by coming into the world to be with us.

In Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech he says: 'It's alright to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee.' Martin Luther King, Jr.'s concept of the New Jerusalem is similar to Swedenborg's. It is not something for us to dream about in the future; it is something for us to create now in this world. Longing for the New Jerusalem is the theme of many African-American spirituals such as "Gonna put on those golden shoes down by the riverside." Rossing asks where that river side is, and answers her own question: "For slaves, the New Jerusalem vision gave hope for freedom even in this life, for a riverside not just in heaven but experienced also as a very real river in their lives that could be crossed to freedom, here and now. They found a glimpse of the riverside of God in the geography of their place. That crossing between the two worlds is key to God's New Jerusalem for us as well.' [165]. The Second coming is about living NOW and changing our world NOW; not about preparing to be snatched off



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the earth. Swedenborg is all about living in the here and now; not preparing for some judgement and 2nd coming."



*10. (2) The human race is the seminary of heaven, ...
that heaven and hell are from the human race, and that therefore the human race is the
seminary of heaven*

"Well, Sally, that sure is different from my tradition. But it does make sense. I wish you a happy New Church Day!"

Let us pray.

Weekly Prayer for 6/19/11

Blessed Father God in the midst of your children, we glory in Your Love and Wisdom this wonderful Father's Day, for you have cared for us with gentle arms and infinite Mercy, keeping us close and guiding us with your Divine Providence. May the Glory of the Lord Shine over all the earth today as we celebrate our Fathers. We give thanks for their guidance throughout the years, and for the sacrifice they have given at home and on the Battlefields of the world. Let us have a day of Peace, Love, and Harmony to celebrate and honor them together. May we Prosper under our Heavenly Father's guidance today and always. AMEN.

Love,
Rev. Judith



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HEALING: Body & Mind or Body vs. Mind?

June 26, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

John 9

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

From Swedenborg:

By the human mind are meant its two faculties, which are called the understanding and the will. The understanding is the receptacle of the light of heaven, which in its essence is wisdom, and the will is the receptacle of the heat of heaven, which in its essence is love, as was shown above. These two, wisdom and love, proceed from the Lord, as a sun, and flow into heaven universally and particularly, whence the angels have wisdom and love; and they also flow into this world universally and particularly, whence men have wisdom and love. [Soul-Body, [Soul-Body, 14, XII]

MESSAGE

Healing: Mind & Matter or Mind over Matter?

Are you interested in any of these approaches to healing? –

Christian Science

Chiropractic

Dr. Oz

faith-healing

Holistic healing Hands on healing Healing Hands

Homeopathy Hypnosis

New Age

New Thought

Positive thinking Reiki

Spiritualism

Utopian communities

Many of today's alternative approaches to healing have grown out of the works of Emanuel Swedenborg [1688-1772] and Anton Mesmer [1734-1815].



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In our Sunday messages, we're exploring the theme of "Holistic Healing." Many of the messages are drawing information from a recent book published by the Swedenborg Foundation: *Swedenborg, Mesmer, & the Mind/Body Connection: The Roots of Complementary Medicine* by Dr. John S. Haller, Jr.

Haller asks the question: How is it that they [Swedenborg & Mesmer] influenced so many different areas of thought and culture? Is there a direct correlation between Swedenborg and Mesmer and these [holistic healing] movements, or is it one of perception? ... The role of the paranormal in society is something that deserves more than an occasional footnote. ... Particularly when studying the country's alternative healing systems, of which there were—and are—many, it is impossible to ignore the paranormal and its connections to both mesmerism and Swedenborgianism.

Today, we'll continue with the story of how healing evolved after Swedenborg and Mesmer.

After the death of Emanuel Swedenborg, many of his followers became involved with the advocates of Mesmerism – also called animal magnetism. We've seen how Andrew Jackson Davis in 1843, at age 17, heard a lecture on Mesmerism and went on to become a well-known medium and Spiritualist with connections with Swedenborgians.

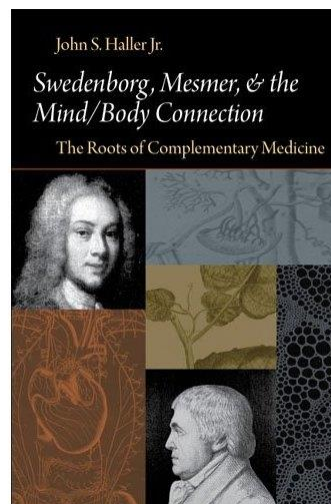
In 1838, a 36 year-old man in Belfast, Maine, went to a lecture on Mesmerism; and he eventually helped launch much of New Thought and modern healing. His name was Phineas Quimby [1802-1866], a clock maker. After the lecture on Mesmerism, he worked with a man named Lucius Burkmar. Quimby put Burkmar into a trance, in which Burkmar could diagnose disease. At first, Quimby thought this was



"animal magnetism" and a form of electricity passing into patients.

After awhile, Quimby came to feel that Burkmar was not picking up an actual disease in a patient, but rather the patient's belief about his disease. As Quimby explored "The Truth," he became convinced that disease was not real; it existed only in the mind. He began to sit with patients and talk to them about their belief about their disease. He would point out the error in their thinking, and people would be healed. It was with this approach that Quimby treated the sick. He claimed that "mind was spiritual matter and could be changed;" that we were made up of "truth and error;" that "disease was an error, or belief, and that the Truth was the cure." He claimed this to be "science of curing the sick."

In 1859 Quimby went to Portland, Maine, where he remained until the summer of 1865, healing the sick. He died at home in Belfast in 1866.





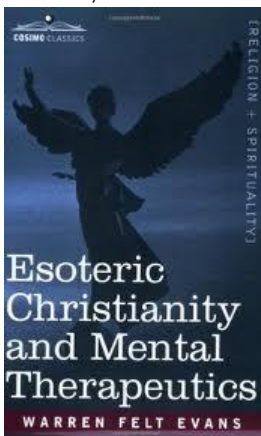
Quimby had an amazing array of patients during his years in Portland. They included Mary M. Patterson, who later founded Christian Science as Mary Baker Eddy. Quimby also healed two young people who met in his office: Julius Dresser and Annetta G. Seabury. They later married and moved to Boston where they started a healing movement known as “New Thought.” Two of their sons would become Swedenborgian ministers in Maine. One of them, Horatio W. Dresser, edited the works of Quimby and wrote about how they compared to Swedenborg.

Another patient of Quimby’s was a man named Warren Felt Evans – a Methodist minister from Vermont who became a Swedenborgian and a student of Quimby’s. He wrote many books comparing Swedenborg’s theology with Quimby’s healing. Here’s a bit of his story:

In 1856, a New Hampshire Methodist minister named Warren Felt Evans [1817-1889] was becoming bored with Methodist church literature and prayer. He began reading the mystics. He had numerous health problems, so turned to prayer to address them. He began praying to be led to “some book or books which would satisfy this inmost need.” He then felt guided to a bookshop in Portsmouth, N.H., where he saw a book by mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. He began reading Swedenborg with great enthusiasm.

But his health began to worsen. He had to suspend his parish work and by 1859 had not been preaching for 6 months. He turned to the writings of Swedenborg to gain a new perspective on healing; one that looks beyond the body to the soul. He wrote “But during this complete prostration of my nervous system my soul had tranquility reposed in God. Far down below my trembling nerves there is a region of soul where all is still and silent.”

In 1863 he decided to visit Phineas Quimby in Portland, Maine. Evans was immediately healed of dyspepsia, which had afflicted him for years. He felt that he had found someone who put into practice Swedenborg’s approach to healing. Evans felt that because of his Swedenborgian background, he understood Quimby’s healing secrets, and could use them himself. Quimby agreed as Evans began his training with Quimby.

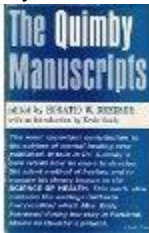


The next year, Evans was re-baptized at the Swedenborgian Church on Beacon Hill. He and his family

moved to Boston, where he became a well-known healer. He wrote many books combining the theology of Swedenborg with the healing techniques of Quimby. Many consider Evans to be a key starter of the New Thought movement. It was through the writings of Evans that many came to learn about Quimby's approaches to healing.

Evans was an important link between Quimby and the Swedenborgian community. Evans came to believe that Quimby's healing methods were Swedenborg's ideas in action.

Not everyone agreed with him, however. Horatio Dresser [son of Annetta and Julius Dresser], Swedenborgian minister and editor of Quimby's works, felt that Evans and Quimby both wandered away from Swedenborg by putting too much emphasis on mind. Dresser claimed that they came to the point of saying that "matter" didn't really exist, that the only reality was in the mind. Swedenborg believed in the reality of both the physical and spiritual planes.



This conflict eventually caused Swedenborgians to forge a path somewhat separate from much of the "positive thinking" and "new thought" literature. An example of a modern "new thought" approach is "The Secret," where we are told we can create our dreams by believing in them and giving our thoughts greater reality than physical matter. Swedenborg overlaps with this approach, but veers slightly off this track into a blending of body and mind, and placing all healing directly with the Divine, and beyond our ordinary thought processes.

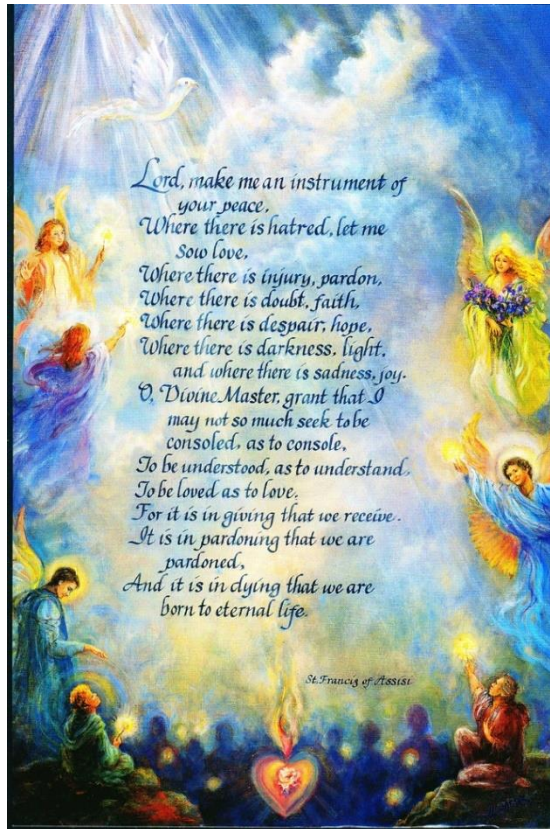
How do you see the body and mind working together in healing? How have you used each/both in your own healing journey?

As we continue to follow the fascinating history of healing since Swedenborg, we'll keep coming back to this important theme of body and mind or body vs. mind. There are a variety of views about this among Swedenborgians, and hopefully we can have a lively discussion on many aspects of the topic.

This Week's Prayer

This week I have been thinking about the ST Francis Prayer. How much our world needs us to contemplate it, imbibe it, and practice it. As we start our journeys to Convention this week bring it's essence with you. for all that are traveling may your journey be filled with all good things, may you meet wonderful people on your journey and may you arrive and return home safely full of Love and Peace.

Love, [Rev. Judith](#)



Lord, make me an instrument of
your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me
sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light,
and where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I
may not so much seek to be
consoled, as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are
pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are
born to eternal life.

St. Francis of Assisi



How Did the Healer Heal? The Story of Quimby

July 3, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Exodus 6

New International Version (NIV)

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty,[a] but by my name the LORD[b] I did not make myself fully known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'"

9 Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor.

10 Then the LORD said to Moses, 11 "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country."

From Swedenborg:

Heavenly Secrets

2870 Few know what freedom is and what non-freedom is. Freedom seems to entail everything that is in keeping with any love and associated delight, and non-freedom to entail everything that is at variance with these. That which is in keeping with self-love and love of the world, and with the desires belonging to those loves, seems to man to be freedom; but that is the freedom of hell. That however which is in keeping with love to the Lord and love towards the neighbour, consequently with the love of what is good and true, is true freedom, being the freedom that exists in heaven.

2872. But heavenly freedom is that which is from the Lord, and in it are all the angels in the heavens. As before said this is the freedom of love to the Lord and mutual love, and thus of the affection of good and truth. The quality of this freedom may be seen from the fact that everyone who is in it communicates his blessedness and happiness to another from inmost affection, and that it is a blessedness and happiness to him that he is able to communicate it. And because the universal heaven is such, it follows that everyone is a center of all forms of blessedness and happiness, and that all these belong at the same time to each angel. The communication itself is effected by the Lord, by wonderful inflowings in an incomprehensible form, which is the form of heaven. This shows what heavenly freedom is, and that it is from the Lord alone.

MESSAGE



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

How Did the Healer Heal? the Story of Quimby
by Rev. Wilma

Many people believe that Phineas Parkhurst Quimby was the most effective healer since Jesus. It does seem that he used some of the techniques of Jesus; as well as tools of a psychology that hadn't yet been developed in his time. There is no longer anyone living who was a patient of his, but we have many accounts of his work.

Phineas Parkhurst Quimby was born in the town of Lebanon, N. H., February 16, 1802. When he was about two years old, his parents moved the family to Belfast, ME. His father was a blacksmith, and had seven children. He only attended school for a short time, and learned much later in life from reading on his own.

Belfast, Maine, 1800's



Phineas Quimby



When he became old enough to go to work, he learned the trade of watch and clock making, which was his occupation for many years.

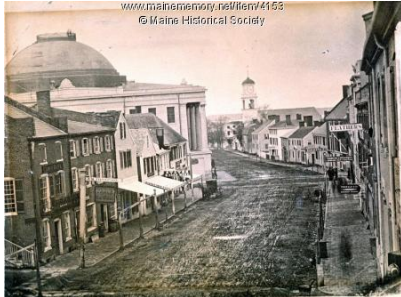
One day Quimby attended a lecture in Belfast on a new concept sweeping Europe and the states: "Mesmerism." It was based on the idea of animal magnetism, involving a kind of electricity. It was believed that using this magnetism, one mind could control another. It evolved into hypnotism.

Quimby was excited by this new concept, and was actively involved in using hypnotic states to heal. While engaged in experiments, Mr. Quimby became more and more convinced that disease was an error of the mind, and not a real thing. On this assumption, he began to facilitate miraculous cures in people around him. In the year 1859 Mr. Quimby rented a room in Portland. He rented a room in the

International House Hotel on Exchange St., where he remained until the summer of 1865, treating the sick by his method. His waiting room would fill up with people waiting to see him, and he often came out

and chatted about his theories.

Exchange St., Portland, ME, 1850's



Quimby had a number of famous patients in his room on Exchange St. in Portland. They included:

Mary Baker Eddy



Warren Felt Evans



Julius Dresser



Annetta [Seabury] Dresser



Annetta G. Seabury Dresser
Lent by Dorothca Reeves

Julius and Annetta met in Quimby's waiting room. They both experienced miraculous healings, and later married. They had a son, Paul, who became a Swedenborgian minister who was quite active in Maine. Another son, Horatio, was a well-known writer on New Thought. He became a Swedenborgian minister for awhile, and was the pastor in Portland, Maine, from 1919-1920.



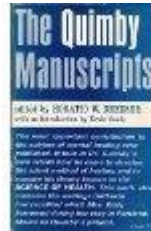
Horatio Dresser



The last five years of Quimby's life were exceptionally hard. He was overcrowded with patients, and greatly overworked, and could not seem to find an opportunity for relaxation.

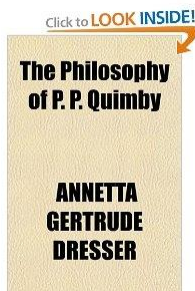
His death occurred January 16, 1866, at his residence in Belfast, at the age of sixty-four.

Quimby never published anything, but he kept copious notes. Horatio Dresser later edited Quimby's



material and published it as *The Quimby Manuscripts*.

Horatio's mother, Annetta [Seabury] Dresser, wrote about her experiences with Quimby.



Here are some of her words about being healed by Quimby:

It was some time in 1860 that I first heard of Dr. Quimby. He was then practising his method of curing the sick in Portland, where he had been located about a year. My home was a few miles from that city, and we often heard of the wonderful work he was doing. We also heard something about his philosophy; and, as he made war with the prevailing theories of the day, there was a strong prejudice against him in the minds of many people. ...

My own experience with Dr. Quimby was a very interesting one, and attended with most happy results. In fact, my first interview with him in May, 1862, as a patient, after six years of great suffering, and as a last resort, after all other methods of cure had utterly failed to bring relief. I had barely faith enough to be willing to go to him, as I had been one of those who were prejudiced against him, and still had more of doubt and fear than expectancy of receiving help. But all fear was taken away as I was met by this good man, with his kindly though searching glance.

The events connected with this first interview are as vivid in mind as those of yesterday. It was like being turned from death to life, and from ignorance of the laws that governed me to the light of truth, in so far as I could understand the meaning of his explanations.

In order to understand the great change which then came into my life, let the reader picture a young girl taken away from school, deprived of all the privileges enjoyed by her associates, shut up for six years in a sick-room, under many kinds of severe and experimental treatment in its worst forms, constantly growing worse, told by her minister that it was the will of God that she should suffer all this torture, ...

I remember one day especially when a panorama of past experiences came before me; and I saw just how my trouble had been made, how I had been kept in bondage and enslaved by the doctors and the false opinions that had been given me. From that day the connection was broken with these painful experiences, and the terrible practices and experiments which had added so much to my trouble; and I lived in a larger and freer world of thought.

How did this great healer do his healings? I don't know if anyone knows for sure. But we have his writings and that of patients of his. Here are some things that are mentioned in a lot of the material:

Explanations to the patient. Annetta Dresser wrote:

His treatment was largely explanatory, -- an explanation of the real as opposed to the seeming condition of the patient. He seemed to make a complete separation between the sufferer and the sickness, and he talked to the sufferer in such a manner that, gradually his senses would become attached to the new life or wisdom which his words conveyed instead of the painful sensations; and, as this continued, the sickness disappeared.

He was convinced that illness and suffering are an error of mind. He would take time to explain this to the patient, explaining the causes of the ailment, and show the patient the truth.

Quiet impressions and insight:

His patients tell us that Quimby had remarkable insight into their character. He connected with them in silence, as he opened his mind to discern their real life and "see it whole."

Rapport.

Rapport with the patient was crucial; a connection spirit to spirit.

Absence

No less important was Quimby's power of "absenting" himself, as he called it, from the patient's concept of his disease. Quimby saw the patient as whole and healed.

Jesus as model

In Quimby's work, imitating Jesus was fundamental and central.

The Unconscious

Perhaps Quimby was a pre-cursor of modern psychology. It sounds like Annetta got in touch with repressed memories and feelings: *I remember one day especially when a panorama of past experiences came before me; and I saw just how my trouble had been made*

Quimby may have helped his patients move beyond repressed beliefs.



Many people have studied his techniques, but he remains unique and mysterious in how he healed. He insisted that he did not work with energy -- like in Mesmerism or hands-on healing. He said he did not go into trances or contact spirits. He said he simply established a rapport with the patient and came to understand how their thinking was causing their illness. Then he helped them change their thinking.

There has been a lot written about Quimby and about the various healing movements that grew from his work. In another message, we'll look more closely at how Quimby's healing techniques compared with Swedenborg's theology.

Do you have any ideas on how Quimby healed? Have you had any experiences with healing [as patient or as healer] that have used similar approaches to Quimby's? Do you have any information about Quimby's healings that you can share with us?

Do you think that you use some of his principles in your life? If not, do you think you could use some of his principles in his life?

This Week's Prayer

Holy, Lord, present with all of us all the time. Thank you for the gift of being your child. Give us inspiration each day to carry out your will and our purpose in life. Grant us safety as we go about our everyday lives this week. Help us to recognize those who have a "can do it" spirit. Thank you for each day's blessings. Keep us close to you, Our Lord, so we will not forget your purposes for us and your Love and Wisdom. Thank you for each day of life.

Rev. Judith



The Birth of New Thought

July 10, 2011

Readings

From the Bible:

John 9

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

From Swedenborg:

There is an inflow from God into us. The inflow comes into our souls because the soul is the inmost and highest part of us. TCR 8, NCE

MESSAGE

The Birth of New Thought

You might well ask, "What is 'New Thought'?" And perhaps you then might inquire, "What was 'old thought'?" And then, "And where does our Emanuel Swedenborg fit into this?". And "does this have anything to do with my daily spiritual life?"

These are excellent questions, about which many books have been written from various perspectives. In the side bar to the left, you'll see some links if you want to explore those questions. Today's message will provide some general and basic answers to those questions, to help us understand how concepts of healing have evolved since the life of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Last week's message was about an amazing healer named [Phineas Quimby](#) [1802-1866]. He insisted that all disease was in the mind. Disease did not exist; it was only a creation of the human mind and could be cured through changing one's thoughts. These ideas have sometimes been called "mind cure" or "mental healing" to distinguish them from healing that happens through sharing energy [Mesmerism, laying on of hands], contact with the spirit world [spiritualism], or prayer [God].

Quimby's ideas were passed orally to some important pupils, whose work is also considered the start of "New Thought."

Mary Patterson [Mary Baker Eddy] took Quimby's ideas to start Christian Science. It took the ideas to the point of rejecting all medicine – including homeopathy – and using only the mind to cure disease.

Warren Felt Evans [a Methodist minister who became Swedenborgian] took Quimby's approach and

integrated them with Swedenborg's theology. He wrote numerous books, which are also considered the start of "New Thought."

Julius Dresser and Anetta Seabury met in Quimby's waiting room and later married. They took his ideas to Boston and started the "Metaphysical Club", also considered the start of New thought.

The Dressers had two sons who became Swedenborgian ministers. Horatio was a prolific writer, and he wrote extensively about Quimby and the start of New Thought. He considered himself to be an adherent of New Thought and a Swedenborgian [and he was a psychologist.] He also wrote many books. Some of his writings compared Swedenborg with Quimby, and criticized Evans for getting much of that wrong.

Last week we explored the [healing approaches of Quimby](#). Today, we'll look at where some of his students took these ideas; and where they integrated with and clashed with Swedenborg.

MARY BAKER EDDY

Mary Baker Eddy (July 16, 1821 – December 3, 1910) was the founder of the Christian Science religion. She was born in Bow, New Hampshire. Although raised a Congregationalist, she rejected predestination and original sin.

At the age of eight, Eddy began to hear voices calling her name; she would go to her mother only to learn that her mother had not called her.

As an adult, she suffering from poor health. Leaving around Tilton, N.H. she decided to visit Phineas Parkhurst Quimby of Portland, Maine, in 1862. During treatments, Eddy was completely healed and became an enthusiastic student.

Shortly after Quimby's death, Eddy fell on the ice, was found to have severe internal spasms. Taken back to her home in Swampscott, she was confined to her bed. Most of those around her felt that she could not be healed. Then, a few days later, she picked up a Bible overwhelmed with the conviction that her life was in God and that God was the only Life, the sole reality of existence. She was instantly healed. She got out of bed, dressed, and walked into the next room.

During the following years, she taught and wrote about her concept of healing. She wrote Science and Health. She watched her husband leave her. She developed "Christian Science," which continues to grow throughout the world. The Dresser family strongly believed that Eddy had taken her ideas from Quimby, not acknowledged then, and distorted them.

In general, Eddy is seen to have been influenced by Quimby, but to have developed her own unique perspective on healing.

HORATIO DRESSER

Horatio was the son of Julius and Annetta. He grew up in the midst of their founding of the Metaphysical Club, their devotion to Quimby, and their antagonism to Mary Baker Eddy.

In 1919, he published, *The History of the New Thought Movement* and became it's first historian. 1919 was quite a year for Horatio. In May, he was ordained a minister in the Swedenborgian Church at their annual convention. The key note speaker that year was Helen Keller!

Dresser considered himself to be an advocate of New Thought, as well as a Swedenborgian. His book provides an excellent understanding of how Swedenborg influenced New Thought – and how New Thought went in directions away from Swedenborg.

His first chapter, *The New Age*, discusses some of the spiritual movements of his time. Then he has a chapter on Quimby, as the originator of the movement, followed by a chapter on how Quimby heals. Then his third chapter is "*The First Author*." He said the first writer about New Thought was Warren Felt Evans. Evans was a Methodist minister who discovered the writings of Swedenborg and became a Swedenborgian. He had serious ailments, and went to Quimby for healing. He started writing about the connection between Quimby and Swedenborg. Horatio says that Evans' first book was excellent, but he then wandered away from Swedenborg and into dimensions of Quimby's view that were clearly not Swedenborgian. Horatio says, with some sadness, that the New Thought movement evolved out of the later writings of Evans, after they had lost their Swedenborgian roots. He believes the New Thought movement would have been much stronger had it stayed closely aligned with Swedenborgian concepts.

If the later devotees of mental healing had taken account of all the factors noted by Quimby and explained so clearly by Evans in this his first statement of it, they would have inquired into the nature of spiritual influx and correspondence and would have adopted an essentially spiritual view of the whole field. Instead of a new "thought," instead of almost exclusive emphasis on suggestion or affirmation, we might have had a new spiritual philosophy embracing the larger truth of the new age.

Let's see where he feels that Evans integrates Quimby with Swedenborg, and where he feels that Evans leave Swedenborg for a secular New Thought.

He defines the basis of Swedenborg this way:

The life of the soul is received by influx from God, the source of all our life. All men are incarnations of the divine. "In all men the Divinity becomes finitely human." The soul receives its form from the divine spirit within. It is in the human form, yet the significance of this form is that it is made in the image and likeness of God. The mind is not then formless and insubstantial, as we sometimes say in our Ignorance; but it consists of real substance, that is, spiritual substance, and is definitely formed according to the divine ideal.

Horatio Dresser says that the mind is not just the brain, but throughout every nerve and fiber in our body. The body correspond to spirit, and spiritual changes are manifested in the body.

Dresser says that Swedenborg had a ground-breaking psychology, and Evans' work on Swedenborg, *Mr. Evans anticipates Freud and his school by more than a generation*

The real difference is what Dresser calls "idealism." Is is a complicated theological concept that I don't pretend to understand. But I think the way Evans uses it is: Only ideas exist. The physical world doesn't exist; only the ideas of the mind. Dresser writes:

One might neglect the bodily conditions of disease and almost come to believe that nothing exists save when we are thinking about it, if one were to take too seriously Evans' statement that a "thing, a world, a disease, comes into our consciousness only when we think of it.... nothing ceases to exist when we cease to think about it. If to "bring disease into the realm of unconsciousness" be all that we need do to make it "unreal," it would indeed be a simple matter to banish all disease from the world. Evans is reading subjective idealism into Swedenborg and throwing his readers upon the wrong track. He declares that "all the objects of nature are phenomena or appearances, as Hegel, Fichte, Berkeley, Swedenborg, and all the idealists affirm." He has been reading the idealists so much of late that he forgets his Swedenborg, who surely never taught that "all outward things are but the exteriorization of ideas." Nor did Swedenborg teach that "thought is the primal force and the greatest power in the world." He did not identify existence with thought, but characterized God as the "divine love and the divine wisdom," teaching that there are two powers in man recipient of these, the will and the understanding (the intellect).

....

Summary of Dresser's Differences Between Swedenborg and New Thought:

Swedenborg says that both physical and spiritual exist. Our physical self is in direct relationship with the spiritual. Our focus is on love, and on living with loving actions. He says Evans puts the emphasis on thought rather than conduct.

The distinction is important. For if, taking seriously Evans's declaration that to think and exist are one and the same, we follow his theory of disease and its cure, we are likely to acquire a psychology without a body, we are apt to think too lightly of the natural world and to make the road to salvation appear easier than it is.

So, Horatio Dresser believes that in the first book of Evans, the psychology and theology of Swedenborg is integrated with the healing techniques of Quimby. This could be the start of an incredible way to use Swedenborg's concepts in actual healing; and to ground healing in Swedenborg's concepts.

Instead, Evans drifted into seeing only the mind as real. The body doesn't really exist. It really doesn't matter so much what we do, but what we think.

I rather like what Horatio Dresser says. My own personal opinion is that he is right is that the modern New Thought movement has some significant differences from Swedenborg in claiming that mind is the only reality.

Personally, here are some examples of statements I sometimes hear from people I consider modern "New Thought" advocates. I disagree with them:

It doesn't matter how we live on the earth; we can think ourselves into a healthy environment without actually changing our behavior.

Violence only happens because, in some way, we attract it by our thoughts. We don't need to punish the perpetrators of violence so much as teach people to think differently so they will not be victims.

We don't need to work towards peace, social justice, etc. We only need to think about these concepts to make them real on the earth.

We don't have work on finding cures for disease; only in changing our thoughts.

People with a lot of money are thinking properly. The poor need to change their thoughts to become rich.

I believe that Swedenborg is an absolute supporter of changing from within. But what we have to change is our relationship with God. And part of that change is to do actions in the physical world. To just "think" differently denies the importance of the physical world and of loving action. Swedenborg's goal is a better world; one that we work towards within and by action; not one that can be created just by thought.

So I do think that Quimby and Swedenborg overlap a lot, and can be integrated. But I also think some ways of understanding Quimby take us away from Swedenborg, and have become a core of New Thought -- including works such as "Power of Positive Thinking," "How to Grow Rich," and parts of "The Secret."

Again, this is only my personal opinion. Many Swedenborgians and many New Thought people disagree with my perspective! So there is no right or wrong here; only a fascinating array of perspectives on healing that we can discuss.

Weekly Prayer
Weekly Prayer for 7/10/11:

Our inspiration comes from Emanuel Swedenborg on Love:

"A man's very life is his love; and such as the love is, such is the life, yea, such is the whole man: but it is the ruling or reigning love that constitutes the man."

Dearest Lord dwelling in the center of all beings, let us Be the most loving of servants. Encourage us to live in Love and Charity each day. Taking your word into the center of our hearts and living through it. Keep us ever mindful of all you would have us be, only our highest and best in the service of others. When we are weary and losing hope, encourage us with your Love and Truth. Remind us that we are never alone for you are ever with us in all that we do. Let us know Joy, and laughter even in the midst of trial and difficulty. Thank you Lord for your wisdom and grace. Bless us this day with your Holy Fire. Amen



Accentuate the Positive ...Eliminate the Negative

July 17, 2011

READINGS

Matthew 4 New International Version

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'[b]"

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

*"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,*

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'[c]"

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'[d]"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'[e]"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.



Christ Served by the Angels
Jacques de Stella, c. 1650. CGFA.

MESSAGE

Accentuate the Positive Eliminate the Negative

by Rev. Jenn Tafel

When preparing this sermon about "spiritual healing" the image of Jesus being ministered to by the angels kept coming to mind. This is the text I use during healing services at the Lansing Church. As often as I read it, the image of Jesus and the healing power of the angels continually speaks to me. There is comfort in knowing that our powerfully present Lord needed help, too.

The story of Jesus' temptation by the devil takes place right after John baptized him. Because there is no linear time mentioned, the time between each of these events is not clear. There are two commonalities between the events: John the Baptist was clearing the way in the wilderness and Jesus was "led up by the Spirit into the wilderness." One definition of wilderness from Swedenborg (as it applies to this story) is,

a state of temptation, in which [a person] is as it were without truths, because surrounded by evil spirits who induce temptations, and then as it were deprive [one] of truths (Apocalypse Revealed 546).

In this story, Jesus was entering into a state of temptation. In fact, the story mentions point blank that He had fasted for forty days and nights and He was hungry. One could ask, "Hungry for what?" The devil picked up on this and ran with it. Isn't this how we experience temptation in our lives?

I wonder why the Lord felt the need to fast. I mean after all, He is the embodiment of the omnipotent creator of the universe. Wouldn't he have the best food available to Him...or at least the ability to transform food? But I digress. On a spiritual level, I see the fasting as a giving up of what formerly "fed" or "nourished" Him. What is interesting is that this fasting took place after he was led into the wilderness. I see this as a decision to let go of old ways and habits and that the temptation is whether or not to go back to these former ways. Of course, one could argue that the Lord really didn't have anything to give up; however, because He chose to take on the human form...it was the negative aspects of being human that Jesus was releasing.

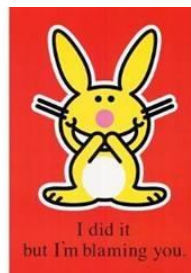


In *Bible Study Notes* by Anita Dole, she explains the three levels of temptation experienced by the Lord:

- 1. To turn stones into bread—is the temptation to make truth on the natural place satisfy our minds, the idea that we can be good by doing external good works without caring about knowledge of God and spiritual things.*
- 2. To cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, trusting in God's promise to take care of Him—is the temptation to do things which we know are wrong and dangerous to our souls and expect the Lord to save us in spite of our folly, to imagine for example, that if we go to church and say we believe in the Lord, we can do about as we please the rest of the week.*
- 3. To fall down and worship the devil—is the temptation to give up the effort to learn and do*

the Lord's will and to seek only self-interest and self-satisfaction .

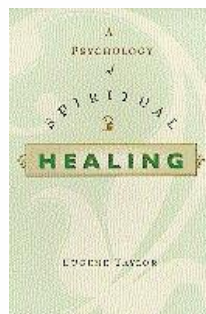
Temptation is a funny thing. Swedenborg explains that it is by entering into temptation that we experience spiritual growth. While I can now understand this definition and can see how it is a truth operating in my life, I didn't always see it as a means for my spiritual path. In my twenties (and even in my teen years), I ignored this definition of temptation and lived to have a good time. "Life's a party...then you die," seemed like a good motto to live by. When looking at the definitions of these three temptations of the Lord, I can see that I was, in fact, living all of these temptations at one point or another. I had no clue what my spirit wanted or I didn't listen to it. I was overwhelmed by my emotions, my thoughts and what my day-to-day reality was. Life just happened to me...it didn't feel like I had any control over my destiny. I blamed the world around me for what was wrong in my life and I didn't really care about consequences. I had no idea that I even remotely gave into temptation.



This graphic sums it up:

I'm sure that my story is not unfamiliar. We've all been there because we are all human. So how did I get to the point where I am today? **Spiritual healing**

To understand the journey of moving from what Swedenborg refers to as "natural human" to "spiritual human" it is important to understand that we experience internal states of heaven and hell. We constantly experience the presence of heaven and hell in this world whether we realize it or not. During the time prior to "waking up," it felt as if I was living through many life lessons all at once—and that felt like hell. However, it turned out to be one big lesson: Start living your true nature. It was a matter of understanding that surrendering my life to God was not in fact giving up, but rather a maturing of my spirit. I no longer wanted to live out of a constant state of being a victim. It turns out that my version of hell is giving into all the distractions, drama and chaos that turn a person from their spiritual nature. And, like so many others, I was completely oblivious for many years. But deep down, I was hungry for something better.



Eugene Taylor states:

What are the realms of heaven and hell but states of our own interior consciousness? Phenomenologically, if the external, natural world is but an emanation of the higher, deeper, and all-encompassing domain of the spirit, and if this domain is made manifest in the external world through human experience, then surely all conceptions of heaven and hell are states of our own interior consciousness projected outward . [p.89]

This is how I currently understand the world in which we live. Our group consciousness is a collection of all of our interior states. As Dr. Phil McGraw says time and again, *How's that*



workin' for you?

Yes indeed. How is your life and is it working for you? The cheapest and easiest form of spiritual healing is to change our belief systems, or “B.S.” It is that simple and it is possible.

As I mentioned in my background information, I participate in alternative healing. There are a variety of modalities to help a person move toward spiritual healing. What my colleagues in alternative healing and Swedenborg agree upon is that a person must be willing to engage in the work of self-examination, get real and ask for the presence of the Divine to assist in the process...and most importantly be willing to make necessary changes in thoughts and behaviors.

The phrase from the song, “Accentuate the Positive...Eliminate the Negative” is not just cute little ditty. I would argue that there is great power in this statement. It does not mean to cover things up and pretend that life is grand. That, is an example of what Einstein would refer to as insanity. This statement actually refers to what the Lord did in his final temptation on the cross. I am not saying that being human is negative, but rather that He gave up what no longer served in the situation and that He lived up to his potential. Maybe I’m over-simplifying it. I am looking for a way that it would apply to my life. The biggest temptations I face are about covering up my greatness and giving into what feels good on a very basic human level.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

The important point to establish for the present discussion, however, is that the experience of higher consciousness is a state of healing. Eugene Taylor p. 126

Injurious habits, wrong thoughts, immoral deeds, on the other hand, are our obstacles, both to health and to spiritual progress. They cut us off from the natural healing powers that are our birthright. They thwart our recovery from illness. They prevent us from living in balance with constantly changing forces around us. Anabolism and catabolism—growth and decay—are constant. The old is constantly being replaced by the new. Eugene Taylor p.133

Let us Pray.

All powerful Lord thank you for all that is in my life, both the bad and the good. From the good My spirit goes on, and from the bad I learn what is not your way. Help me to understand this world without becoming too attached to it. Help me to focus on you first in all things. Give me the strength and comfort to endure when things go wrong. Help me to look at the beauty around me rather than the ugly. Let me be reminded that I can grow where you plant me....even if it feels like concrete. Help me to know that you are there by my side with each task I do. I ask for your blessings on my family, friends, communities, churches, and the world. Thank You Lord!

AMEN. [Rev. Judith](#)



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

Shamanic Soul Healing

July 24, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Isaiah 22 NIV

19 In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. 20 It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. 21 So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. 22 The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.

John 15

The Vine and the Branches

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 1

From Swedenborg:

9031. And healing he shall heal him. That this signifies restoration, namely, by means of interpretation, is evident. For if the things which are in the literal sense of the Word are looked at interiorly, they all agree together. This is circumstanced like that which is said in the Word about the sun, that it rises and sets, when yet it does not rise or set; but such an appearance is presented to the inhabitants of the earth, because the earth rotates every day around its axis. This natural truth lies hidden in the former, which is according to the appearance to the external sight. If it had been said in the Word contrary to this appearance, the common people would not apprehend it, and what the common people do not apprehend they do not believe. The case is similar with the Sun of heaven, which is the Lord, concerning which it is also said that it "rises," but in hearts, when man is being regenerated; and also when he is in the good of love and aith; and that it "sets" when man is in evil and in the consequent falsity. And yet the Lord is continually in His rising, from which also He is called the "Sunrise," or "East," and He is never in any setting; nor does He turn Himself away from man, but man turns himself away from Him. From this arises the appearance that the Lord turns away His face and also brings evil; and therefore it is also so said in the Word. This likewise is the truth, but apparent truth, thus it is not in conflict with the former.

From all this it can now be seen what is meant in the internal sense by "healing he shall heal," namely, the restoration of spiritual truth, which is effected by means of a right interpretation of the memory-truth, or that of the literal sense of the Word. A.C.



3] By "healing he shall heal" is signified in the spiritual sense to restore, because disease and sickness signify the infirmity of the internal man, which infirmity exists when he is sick in respect to his life, which is the spiritual life; thus when he turns aside from truth to falsity, and from good to evil. When this is the case, the spiritual life sickens; and when he wholly turns himself away from truth and good, it dies; but this death is called "spiritual death," which is damnation. As this is the case with the life of the internal man, therefore such things as relate to diseases and death in the natural world are said in the Word of the diseases of the spiritual life, and of its death. So also the cures of diseases, or healings, as in Isaiah: Jehovah smiteth Egypt, smiting and healing; whence he turneth himself unto Jehovah, and He shall be entreated for them, and shall heal them. (Isa. 19:22).

MESSAGE

Shamanic Soul Healing

Shamanism is an ancient term used in many indigenous cultures to describe healers who work at a soul level. Shamans are said to mend the soul -- sometimes by healing traumas that have brought one's spirit/soul out of balance. They gain knowledge and insight from working with the spirits of nature such as rocks and trees, the land, their ancestors. For the shaman everything is alive as spirit, energy, or consciousness.

How do shamans heal? There are many differences across cultures, but also some basic commonalities.

ALTERED STATE OF AWARENESS

The shaman will often shift his or her own state of awareness through meditation, chants, prayer, or other approaches. The shaman will then "see" through a new set of eyes, what is happening in one's body and soul. The shaman journeys to other dimensions to find the necessary help to return you to wholeness.

SPIRITUAL

Shamanic healing focuses on the spiritual aspect of illness; it addresses the part of the illness that is in your spirit or soul. Shamans believe that illness/injury appears in the spirit before it shows up in the physical body, and that if the body is injured, the injury will also exist on the level of the spirit.

UNIQUE AND INDIVIDUAL

Western medicine strives to find medicine that will cure everyone with the same illness. The "one method/one pill cures all" idea doesn't work in shamanism, however. The shaman seeks the right healing for this person at this time.





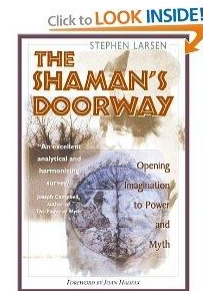
HEALING VS CURE

Shamanic healing has effected cures on many different types of conditions. It is capable of addressing any illness. However, there is a difference between healing and cure. Healing occurs on many levels: in the emotions, in the body, in relationships with others, and in relationship to the planet. A cure is one dimensional: you have an illness and a cure eliminates it. Cures do not address your sense of well being, or whether your life is rich and full of power.

Shamans seek to perform healing which may also result in cures.

Stephen Larsen on Shamans:

Stephen Larsen is a Jungian therapist and a professor of transpersonal psychology who was raised as a Swedenborgian. He and his wife Robin were good friends of Joseph Campbell, and had been his official biographers. Larsen's book, *The Shamans Doorway*, carries many of Campbell's ideas on myths into understanding shamans; especially in guiding us to our wholeness.



Larsen says that our modern, technological society is one of alienation, and we have lost the connections with our deeper, inner selves that have been common in other cultures. We know that many people of the past had visionary experiences. Larsen says: "As these ordinary visionary discoveries hardened into more permanent structures of beliefs and values, orthodoxies and dogma developed and the shaman's role was gradually transformed into that of the priest. ... Unlike the shaman, he does not personally and ecstatically enter into the supernatural dimension to renew contact between the mythic and the human worlds."

Larsen says we need to rediscover the tools of the ancient Shaman to help heal the world.

The world needs to move towards "mythic engagement" – dialogue, transformation, and renewal. In such a society, one can move into altered states, and bring back the learnings to enhance physical reality.

This is the role that, throughout history, has been done by shamans.



The shaman is the ideal figure to help connect the two worlds.

Roger Walsh on shamans:

Transpersonal writer Roger Walsh says that Shamans are the oldest mediators of ordinary reality with the non-physical world. They have existed for thousands of years in many cultures and religious traditions. Walsh says there are 3 characteristics of a shaman:

- The shaman can voluntarily enter altered states of consciousness.
- The shaman can experience him/herself on a journey to other realms
- The shaman can use these journeys as a means for helping individuals and their community.

SWEDENBORG AS A SHAMAN

Swedenborg is a good example of a shaman. He certainly fits all of these criteria. He was able to go into – and out of – altered states of consciousness. Swedenborg -- as well as many modern-day

transpersonal psychologists – believes that some psychotic people may enter states quite similar to that of the mystic. But the psychotic has no control over the experience, no reference points with which to journey back. When someone loses touch with reality we don't know whether that is because he got lost in unboundaried consciousness. Swedenborg would say also that the person could be sensitive and open, and is inviting evil spirits into this space.

But the shaman does not stumble onto these states, or get lost in them. The shaman is able to go into such a state when needed, and return with even greater wholeness than when begun.

Also, in most traditions there is some kind of journey or out of body experience. Swedenborg regularly took trips to other realms, to chat with the inhabitants. His book *Heaven and Hell* is an example. Many shamans have traveled to other realms, talked with spirits, had visions, received advanced knowledge. Yet Swedenborg insisted that we do not have to travel to gain this knowledge. We only need to go into the center of our hearts.

To be a shaman is to bring inspired knowledge back for healing.

For Swedenborg, the journey was all about being of service. He would come back from his journeys and write, as ways of helping us understand more deeply.

Larsen says that many feel called today to participate in mediating between the two realms of existence to aid in healing. Such people have an urge to make their own spiritual journeys within, even if they are not easy.

You as a shaman:

Have you ever been to a shamanic healer? Do you do healings from a shamanic perspective? Do you feel called to be a shamanic healer? Share your experiences!



Let us pray.

This week's prayer:

Holy Lord, who dwells in the Most High, thank you for this day for the opportunity to worship you with every action that we take. Thank you for the simple signs and wonders of this earth: the wave of grass in a simple breeze, the birds morning song, days of childhood when we swung in a tree swing, a sprinkler set on high to run through, the laughter of children at play, the quiet murmur of conversation on the front porch.....so many things to be thankful for and to recognize a signs of a simple, love filled life. A Life that you have given to all of us. Let us look each day for the simple signs of your love. Keep us focused there, for that is where you are in your people, and the things of the natural earth. Blessings abound.

May we see them always. Amen

[Rev. Judith](#)



Swedenborgian
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Love, Spirit, Life

Homeopathy and Swedenborg

July 31, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

John 4:46-50

New International Version (NIV)

46 Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum.

47 When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

48 “Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”

49 The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

50 “Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”

The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

From Swedenborg:

282. The Lord could heal the understanding in every man and thus cause him to think not evil but good, and this by means of fears of different kinds, miracles, conversations with the dead, or visions and dreams. But to heal the understanding alone is to heal man only outwardly, for understanding with its thought is the external of man's life while the will with its affection is the internal. The healing of the understanding alone would therefore be like palliative healing in which the interior malignity, closed in and kept from issuing, would destroy first the near and then the remote parts till all would become mortified. The will itself must be healed, not by the influx of the understanding into it, for that is impossible, but by means of instruction and exhortation from the understanding. Were the understanding alone healed, man would become like a dead body embalmed or covered by fragrant spices and roses which would soon get such a foul odor from the body that they could not be brought near anyone's nostrils. So heavenly truths in the understanding would be affected if the evil love of the will were shut in. Divine Providence #282

MESSAGE

Homeopathy and Swedenborg ***by Rev. Wilma***



My first visit to the Fryeburg New Church assembly was quite eventful. It was the mid 1980's, and I was new to the Swedenborgian Church. I had just started my studies at the Swedenborg School of Religion. I was having a wonderful time at the camp, when I stumbled and twisted my ankle. I was in incredible pain. I saw Dr. Bill Woofenden – one of the professors at the school – jump up and say he would fix me.

He returned moments later with a box that looked like a first aid kit. When he opened it, however, I saw that it was filled with homeopathic remedies. Bill told me to put out my hand, and he poured pills of various colors into it, and told me to take them all. I was quite dubious, but swallowed them all quickly. The pain was gone within minutes. Later in the camp week, I had a chance to talk with him about



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homeopathy. I asked if a lot of Swedenborgians were interested in homeopathy, and I was amazed to hear that Swedenborg actually had a big impact on the development of the field. I was fascinated, and have continued learning about this area ever since.

What is homeopathy? How does it connect/compare with Swedenborg? How effective is it?

Many of the concepts of homeopathy can be found in the ancient work of Paracelsus in the early 1500's. He opposed the common medical practices of purging, bleeding, sweating, and vomiting that were used to balance the body. Paracelsus was influenced by alchemy and he believed that healing would come from infusing the body with a material that had a spiritual character. He believed in an unseen force governing the universe and said that we all have an "inner alchemist" to help us heal. He had a doctrine of correspondences; that all elements in the natural world got their meaning from the spiritual world. He said that there was a Divine Human. His concept of "similars" had a strong influence on the development of homeopathy. It was generally believed that illness should be treated by whatever is opposite of the illness. Paracelsus realized that that doctors needed to treat the patient with a substance similar to the illness. This is what became the focus of homeopathy.



In North America, there was an "eclectic" theory around the time of the revolution. Some felt that just as we had achieved our independence from Great Britain, we needed to become independent of the medical theories of the day. Thomas Jefferson said that the Declaration of Independence should be applied to medicine. The American eclectics asserted the radical proposition that the physicians was to assist nature; not stand in its way.



Dr. Samuel Hahnemann
1755-1843

HAHNEMANN

Dr. Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) is considered to be the founder of homeopathy. There is no evidence that he was influenced by Swedenborg; however, the work of Mesmer's animal magnetism had a big impact on him. He was impressed with the how Mesmer passed his hands over the patient to transfer vital energy to the afflicted areas of the body. The concept of "energy field" was important to him in his work.

Hahnemann was born in Germany and graduated from medical school in 1779 and started his own medical practice. He soon got discouraged with medical practices of his time that included purging, bloodletting, and poisonous chemicals and started experiments in 1790. In that same year he translated a book: William Cullen's A Treatise of the Materia Medica. He also decided to test Peruvian bark for intermittent fever. He found that the bark could produce the symptoms of malarial or intermittent fever. He concluded that medicines capable of producing symptoms of disease in a healthy person could cure the disease in a sick person. He worked with the law of "similars" [or nature's law] to find remedies for symptoms rather than diseases. He was influenced by philosophers who claimed that small doses of drugs could be more powerful than large doses. Whereas physicians would treat the entire body for every ailment, Hahnemann was convinced that specific symptoms could be treated separately.

Although Hahnemann himself apparently was not influenced by Swedenborg, most of the early homeopaths in the U.S. were Swedenborgians.

EARLY NORTH AMERICAN HOMEOPATHS

One of the first homeopaths in the US was a Swedenborgian: Hans Burch Gram [1786 to 1849]. He lived in Boston. He believed that Swedenborg's writings were much closer to homeopathic principles that

the work of Mesmer.

Swedenborg felt that everything corresponded to something in the spiritual world, including disease. Swedenborgians began to develop the concept that disease had a spiritual origin rather than a physical one

The principle suppliers of homeopathic remedies were Swedenborgians: Francis E. Boericke and Adolph J. Tafel of Boericke & Tafel in Philadelphia and Otis Cla of Boston. They distributed homeopathic remedies AND published works of Swedenborg's.



JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON

Of particular importance was James John Garth Wilkinson, a British doctor, who converted to homeopathy, graduated from the Hahnemann College in Philadelphia, and became a surgeon at the Hahnemann Hospital.

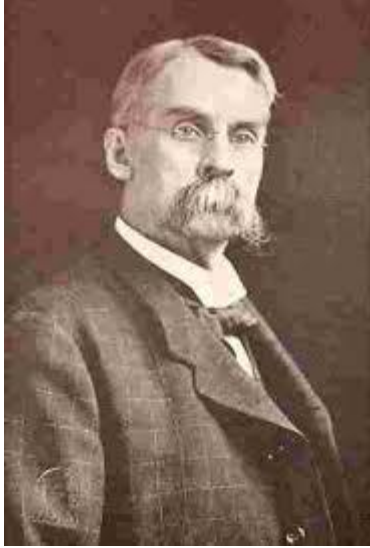
Wilkinson was born on June 3, 1812 in England. He was an exact contemporary of Charles Dickens and Robert Browning, both of whom he knew, but well outlived both of them, dying at the Age of eighty-seven on October 18, 1899, a few weeks after the publication of his last Book.

His wife, Emma, had a big influence in persuading him to take up the practice of homoeopathy. Their baby had a sudden attack of bronchitis during the night. Garth ordered ipecacuanha wine as an emetic and went down to his office to fetch it. The medicine stood there and husband and wife argued about who was to administer it. Neither wanted this unpleasant burden. Emma felt that this illness was a Divine opportunity for Garth to experience Homeopathy. She used a tiny amount of ipecacuanha, a homeopathic remedy, and the child was instantly cured.

Wilkinson became a homoeopathist, and he devoted himself to the study of Swedenborg. He translated many of Swedenborg's works. He became a printer and was well-known for printing Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

Henry James Sr. also played an important role in introducing Wilkinson to homeopathy. "You more than any other man led me into homeopathy," wrote Wilkinson. Henry James Sr. distributed many of Wilkinson's translations of Swedenborg in the U.S.

Wilkinson became convinced of the similarity between Swedenborg and the principles of homeopathy, especially The Doctrine of Correspondence.



JAMES TYLER KENT [1849 to 1916]

This man was the most influential homoeopaths in the U. S., and he became an ardent Swedenborgian.

Just as Garth's wife was the primary influence in his becoming a homoeopathist and a Swedenborgian, it was two wives of Kent that brought him to both homeopathy and Swedenborg.

Dr. James Tyler Kent was born in Woodhul, Steuben County, New York in United States on March 31, 1849.

He studied eclectic medicine from The Eclectic Medical Institute of Cincinnati in 1871. Eclectic medicine was the branch of medicine which made use of botanical remedies along with other substances and physical therapy practices, popular in the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

After obtaining his medical degree, Dr. Kent went to his native place named 'Woodhul' and started his eclectic medical practice there, but he practiced for only a very short period. He married but his wife died at the age of 19 soon after their marriage.

Later, Dr Kent moved to city St. Louis in the state of Missouri in 1874, and practiced there for few years. He remarried again with an American Baptist girl at the age of 26. . He became very successful man which made him a member of the national eclectic medical institute

His wife suddenly fell ill. He tried many treatments, allopathy or eclectic to solve her problem but they all weren't useful. She hadn't given a positive response to any treatment for her complaints of weakness, anemia and insomnia. She stayed awake for many nights.

At last, she insisted Dr. Kent give her homeopathic treatment which was a very new concept at that time. He was against homeopathy but he agreed, and consulted a leading homeopathic physician, Dr. Phalen. Phalen asked her many questions regarding her fears, desires, and mental state which seemed useless to Dr. Kent. Dr. Phelan put few drops of a substance into a glass of water and advised her to take one teaspoonful every 2 hours, till she felt asleep. Dr. Kent laughed at such a foolish form of treatment, but he gave her the medication.

As he was very busy with his study, he forgot to give her the 2nd dose. He remembered after 4 hours and he came out from his study to give her the successive dose. But, he was surprised to find her sleeping quietly. It was miracle for him! Later, she became a regular patient of Dr. Phalen and her health improved steadily

Kent became a noted homeopathist and President of The International Hahnemannian Association in 1887. Later, he was a professor of Homeopathic Medical School at Philadelphia. Eventually his beloved wife did pass away.

Kent met with a patient called 'Clara Louisa Tobey' who had just finished her medical studies, but could not find a cure for a serious illness she had. He was able to cure her with homeopathy. She became his wife; and she then brought him into Swedenborgian circles. Kent was impressed by Swedenborgian theory. He read everything he could of Swedenborg's and found that the theology perfectly explained homeopathy. He explained all theories of Hahnemann in the language of Swedenborg.

Dr. Kent was a believer of internal cause rather than external effect in case of disease. He thought that disease flows from the inner side to the external side. He gave greater importance to will and

understanding (mental symptoms) of a person rather than physical symptoms in a state of disease. He believed in 2 worlds of the human - internal and external, and clarified that disease was present in the internal world on spiritual level.

Kent's work brought together the homeopathy of Hahnemann with the theology of Swedenborg. Because of him, the early homeopathy movement in North America became quite intertwined with Swedenborg.



Elinore C. Peebles (1897-1992)

Elinore Peebles [1897-1992]

Elinore was an active member of the Boston Swedenborgian Church [now the Church on the Hill] for many years. She was the daughter of a well-known Swedenborgian homeopathist: Charles Cutting. She says that as a 7 year old girl she sat in on the Sunday afternoon gatherings at her home of local homeopathists. Most of them were also Swedenborgians. She forever saw the two as intertwined. At one point in her life she wore a t shirt that said on the front: *Here comes a homeopath*. On the back it said *There goes a Swedenborgian*.

She had a life active in both homeopathy and in the Swedenborgian Church in Boston.

Representation of the late Elinore Peebles described by:

YOUR EXPERIENCES

Have you ever had a healing experience from homeopathic treatment? Do you provide homeopathic treatments to others? Please share your experiences in the blog below. We will explore personal experiences with homeopathy, and how the experience seemed to reflect [or not] Emanuel Swedenborg.

Let us Pray

Dear Lord, in Gratitude we pray, Thank you for the Secret Place of the Most High that you have given us, so that we know your Will, your Peace, your Discipline, your Laughter, your Joy, and your all abiding Love. We are your children and we endeavor to do your will with open and willing hearts. In this negative world atmosphere, help us to dwell with you rather than with the appearance. We need your inspiration and give thanks for it. Help us to be mindful of all that we are, that we have and your continuing Love and Care. Bless us with your Wisdom, Truth, Love, Generosity and Understanding. AMEN.

Rev. Judith



Swedenborgian
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Love, Spirit, Life

Mystical Healing Journey

August 14, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Mark 10, NIV

Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

From Swedenborg:

If it is not known that 'eye' in the Word means the understanding of truth, which is faith, neither can it be known what is implied by the Lord's action when He healed the blind man, He spat on the ground and made clay with His saliva, and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. John 9:6, 7.

Since all the Lord's miracles, like all Divine miracles, had to do with those things that belong to the Lord's kingdom and the Church, 7337, 8364, so did this miracle too. AC 9051, 3

MESSAGE

Mystical Healing Journey: the story of Rev. Judith Vandergrift

by Rev. Wilma

We have explored the influence of Swedenborg on the history of healing.

Now it is time to leave history and come into the present.

What is happening in the world today with healing? What is happening in your life or with your friends? Today we look at the mystical healing journey of Rev. Judith Vandergrift, our prayer minister in this web community.



Judith Vandergrift was a Disciple of Christ student at Pacific School of Religion in the spring of 2006. She took a course on spiritual living by Rev. Frank Rose. The more Judith heard about this "Emanuel Swedenborg," the more intrigued she became. She had not been totally at home as a Disciple of Christ. Her life had been filled with mystical encounters and healing gifts, yet she hesitated to share these with her own



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denomination. She wasn't sure how this part of her life would be received, so didn't talk a lot about herself. She yearned for a church where she could be her whole self.

In the middle of her course with Rev. Rose, she had an epiphany. She knew God was present and that God was calling her to ordination in the Swedenborgian Church. She couldn't tell you how she knew this, but she was accustomed to trusting her intuitive self to understand God's guidance in her life. She requested re-baptism as a Swedenborgian.



She writes this about her childhood:

I was born September 27th in the Station Hospital at FT. Benning, GA. My father was an army officer there and my mother was an artist. I do not remember much about my childhood, but I did remember understanding "love" as a baby less than a year old. I was in my crib in my room, my parents were in the kitchen down stairs arguing....I knew what would heal the argument....LOVE...but had no language to tell them.



I saw my father for the last time at age 3 ½. He moved out, and I never heard from him again. [However, years later, in my forties, I suddenly started thinking about him. I broke through the family rule that we had no contact with my father's family. I connected with his side of the family just before his death and learned that he had had a stroke.]

After Dad left, we moved to Atlantic City to be near my grandfather.

On Christmas day when I was five I received a male doll for Christmas from Santa. I took the doll to the local store in his buggy, and wanted to buy a friend some candy. I asked my friend to please watch my doll while I bought candy. Something inside me gave me a sharp warning not to leave my buggy. When I came out of the store, my friend was crying because some mean boys had taken my baby doll and buggy. This is the first time it occurred to me that perhaps I had a guardian angel.

Although I had been baptized in the Episcopal Church, my mother started taking me to the Christian Science Sunday school. Here I learned that God was Love, Jesus loved me, and that I could cure my own sickness. When I was sick, a little voice in my head would tell me that I had a headache or a stomachache. If I would tell him to go away, then my headache would disappear. I realized I could tell headaches to go away, and they would. That came in handy as I had frequent migraines until I was in my forties.

And so I grew up, never questioning that I had a guardian angel to warn me when sometime bad was about to happen, and never questioning that I could cure my own illnesses by telling them to go away. As an adult, I became a kindergarten teacher and I got a B.S. in Organizational Studies. But my deep love was healing. I had always known how to heal myself. Now I wanted to heal others.



As an adult, Judith has been mother, wife, teacher, student, and healer. She has 2 grown children: Kathryn and Alan. Another baby died right after birth. Judith now has 5 grandchildren and 4 great

grandchildren. Judith has studied Mind Dynamics, Science of Mind, Unity, and attended the Berkeley Psychic Institute.



She studied hypnosis and became a certified hypnotherapist in alchemical hypnotherapy. Judith found hypnosis to be a powerful tool to teach people pain management and personal healing. She is also a certified Reiki healer.

Rev. Judith says:

When I do a healing I always ask for God's will to be done. Before I begin I ask the Lord to guide me and remove anything from me that would block the flow of the healing energy.

When I do a Reiki healing, I balance my energies. Then I usually put my hands on the feet or the crown. I do not bother with any other positions because they aren't necessary for me to direct the energy.

I learned Divine Mind healing, where I clear the energy in the chakras and aura, and found I could use my healing skills in my chaplaincy. Once, I had the opportunity to work with a touch healer who was a nurse. Together we channeled energy into a dying woman. I saw the woman light up in brilliant white. The nurse and I loved working together, and felt a powerful healing bond. The patient said she felt very good afterwards, and she saw light. We couldn't cure her body of its infirmities, but we healed her spirit. She said to me late one night that she felt a change in her body and that she was dying. I told her that I would be right by her side, but the actual dying process she had to do alone. I loved her like she was my family.

Judith also learned a lot about healing from Native Americans. For many years she would sweat with Native Americans, attended the Native American church services services, and did a real vision quest with medicine men.



So, when Judith had that epiphany in 2006, she knew it was a major step in her life. She was being invited into the Swedenborgian Church, where she could integrate all of her healing experiences in ordained ministry. She knew she had found her spiritual home for the rest of her life, where she could continue to learn about healing and to share her knowledge with others. She was ordained on July 5, 2008 at the Cambridge Chapel.

Rev. Judith feels that her prayer ministry with our web community is a form of healing. She believes that praying for each other is a way of sharing healing energies. She says: *I have really enjoyed reading the series on healing that we have been doing. I identify with many different forms of healing, especially those involved with energies and with use of the mind. In my own life, I integrate many different styles that I have learned from numerous places. To me, Swedenborg provides a framework rather than a technique. Swedenborg explains to us that we are both spirit and body, and that both parts of ourselves need to be involved in healing. Swedenborg doesn't say healing has to be one particular way. Swedenborg opens the door to explore the vast world of healing, knowing that all healing comes from the Lord.*



Let us Pray

Beloved Lord, the healer of us all. Help us this week to heal and thrive in your Love and Wisdom. Keep us close to you as we do our work so that your love shines through to all those we serve for you. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to serve you.

Amen.

[Rev. Judith](#)



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

Hildegard's Healing

August 21, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible:

Isaiah 6:1-13

6In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 2Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

5And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" 6Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." 8Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

From Swedenborg:

Divine Love and Wisdom (Rogers) n. 115

115. But how the Lord is in an angel, and an angel in the Lord, cannot be comprehended unless one knows the nature of their conjunction. It is a conjunction of the Lord with the angel, and of the angel with the Lord. Consequently it is a reciprocal conjunction.

This conjunction on the part of the angel is as follows. An angel has no other perception than that he possesses love and wisdom of himself, like any person, and thus he feels as though love and wisdom are his as qualities belonging to him. If he did not have that perception, there would be no conjunction; thus he would not have the Lord in him, and he would not be in the Lord. Nor is it possible for the Lord to be in any angel or person unless the one in whom He is present with His love and wisdom perceives and feels that presence as something his own. Because of this the Lord is not only received, but, having been received, is retained and also loved in return. Consequently it is because of this that an angel becomes wise and remains wise.

Who could possibly want to love the Lord and the neighbor, and who could possibly want to become wise, if he did not feel and perceive what he loves, learns and incorporates as being something his own? Who would otherwise retain it in himself? If the case were not as it is, any love and wisdom flowing in would have no seat, for it would flow on through a person without affecting him. Thus the angel would not be an angel, and the person would not be a person; indeed, the angel or person would be only like something inanimate.

It can be seen from this that there must be reciprocity for conjunction to exist.

MESSAGE

Hildegard's Healing



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Hildegard of Bingen [1098 - 1179] was the 10th child in a noble family, so was given to a convent as a "tithed" child to the church.

As she grew older, she began having visions, and felt a call to write the visions. She describes the experience of the calling:

Heaven was opened and a fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain, and infiltrated my whole heart and my whole breast, not like a burning but a warming flame, as the sun warms anything its rays touch. And immediately I knew the meaning of the exposition of the Scriptures ...

She realized that she had been having visions since she was five years old, but always dismissed them as insignificant. Even with this powerful experience of call, she tried to ignore it. She did not feel worthy to be an instrument of God. God told her to write down all that she saw and heard in her visions, but she resisted.

But although I heard and saw these things, because of doubt and low opinion of myself and because of diverse sayings of men, I refused for a long time a call to write, not out of stubbornness but out of humility, until weighed down by a scourge of God, I fell onto a bed of sickness. ..

then, compelled at last by many illnesses, and by the witness of a certain noble maiden of good conduct [the nun Richardis von Stade] and of that man whom I had secretly sought and found, as mentioned above, I set my hand to the writing. While I was doing it, I sensed, as I mentioned before, the deep profundity of scriptural exposition; and, raising myself from illness by the strength I received, I brought this work to a close - though just barely - in ten years. [...] And I spoke and wrote these things not by the invention of my heart or that of any other person, but as by the secret mysteries of God I heard and received them in the heavenly places. And again I heard a voice from Heaven saying to me, 'Cry out therefore, and write thus!'



Her health only improved when she decided to follow God's call. She started painting and writing -- music, poetry, and books. She became famous in her time, and is perhaps even better known today. Matthew Fox has brought her works back into public prominence, and many are discovering her again today.



Hildegard's experience gives us another perspective on healing. Sometimes we can become sick because we are shutting out Divine energy in some way. The path to wholeness and healing is to open oneself to the Divine energy.

Like Swedenborg, she received a dramatic call in middle age and was given new understanding of the scripture. Her willingness to respond to the call brought her into wholeness.

Many of her visions, or "Illuminations" were beautiful and complex paintings that contained spiritual meaning. Her music is deeply haunting. They can be vehicles of healings for others.

Most researchers now believe that Hildegard suffered from migraines. Her visions were like the visual hallucinations that are part of migraine headaches. After a migraine attack, sufferers usually experience sickness, paralysis, and/or blindness. Hildegard had all of these symptoms. Hildegard, like other patients, felt a sense of well-being -- even euphoria -- afterwards.

With God's help, Hildegard turned a serious illness into mystical experience and creative outpourings for the world.

Her art and music are considered very healing in themselves. Enjoy her "illuminations" and her music; see if they are healing for you.



Let us Pray

Inspiration & Message by Rev. Judith

Since I am traveling I have been focused on Nature and the beauty we can find in our surroundings.

Sometimes I can look at a black top road, and there growing right in the middle of it is a



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wildflower.

Yes, even in the midst of a black road, God is with us. And at the end is beauty and love growing in the muck.

Years ago a Native American Woman told me to go to a Park and recline on the grass on my stomach to reduce pain, both emotional and physical. Well at first I had my doubts about doing that for my aches, but I went to a near bye park and tried it . IT WORKED ! ever since that time, when I remember, I go visit Mother Nature and give her my love, my pain and my concerns. I pray too. This is a remedy that is free for the asking.

OH, God, who is always present within us, guide us to your healing nature and waters. Give us the knowledge of the wealth existing in nature. Help us during the muddy times to remember to go to the Nature for your Presence, your Healing, your Comfort and your Love. When all seems lost ,teach use to know that You Lord have the answers and the Way. With deep Gratitude for your World and your Love we say, Thank You!



Prayer and Uses

August 28, 2011

READINGS

Scripture: Mark 11: 23-26

23For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

25And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Swedenborg:

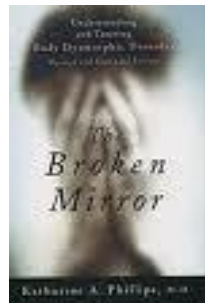
4054. The brain, like heaven, belongs to the realm of ends which are uses, for whatever flows in from the Lord is an end looking towards the salvation of the human race. This is the end which reigns in heaven, and also which as a result reigns in the brain, for the brain, where man's mind is seated, looks to ends in the body, that is to say, so that the body may serve the soul and that the soul may be eternally happy.

MESSAGE

Prayer and Uses

"This is incredibly embarrassing," Jennifer began. "It's really hard for me to talk about this. I don't want to be here." She had in fact canceled her first two appointments with me and had finally agreed to come to see me only at her mother's insistence. I asked Jennifer if she could explain what was so embarrassing. "I don't like talking about my problem," she said. "You'll probably think I'm silly or vain. But I'm not," she said with tears in her eyes. "This is a very serious problem. I can't even tell you how bad it is." She sat silently for a minute. "Well, I guess I should tell you what it is. I think I'm really ugly. In fact, I think I'm one of the ugliest people in the whole world." Jennifer was, by anyone's standards, attractive. She was a 22-year-old woman with long strawberry-blond hair, large green eyes, and a beautiful complexion. What could she possibly believe was wrong with how she looked? I couldn't see any flaws anywhere. At first, Jennifer was reluctant to discuss the details.

Through this patient, Dr. Kathryn Phillips became intrigued about the diagnosis, Body Dysmorphic Disorder. She has written two books: *The Broken Mirror: Understanding and Treating Body Dysmorphic Disorder* and *Body Dysmorphic Disorder: A Treatment Guide*.



She writes:

BDD is an emotionally painful, yet, underrecognized psychiatric disorder—one in which normal-looking or even attractive people are preoccupied with one or more defects or flaws in their appearance. However, the defects aren't visible—or are barely visible—to others. People with this disorder may, for example, think that their hair is too curly, too straight, or too thin. Or that they have "veins" on their cheeks, scars on their nose, or skin that's too red or too pale. Some think that their nose is too big, their lips are too thin, their hips are too big, or their breasts are too small. Any body part can be disliked. People with BDD not only focus on one or more physical flaws that other people don't notice—they think about them excessively. They worry. They obsess. Their appearance worries cause them emotional suffering and interfere with their life. BDD isn't just a bad hair day. BDD often makes little sense to other people.

A friend of our web site has suffered from B.D.D. He writes:

Hello. My name is Erik. I have a story I would like to share about my experience with Body Dysmorphic Disorder. You are probably wondering what Body Dysmorphic Disorder is. That is why it is important for me to share my story.

His mother Phyllis writes:

My son was always a happy-go-lucky kid. However, his senior year of high school we and the staff at his high school began to notice a change in Erik. He began to develop a shorter and shorter fuse and would become angry with the other students as well as the staff. This was so unlike him. He also wore a beanie 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We just figured he was a teenage boy and it was his favorite beanie.

Around Christmas 2009 he was asked to remove his beanie for a picture. He became very anxious and wanted to leave. We realized then there was definitely something more going on. He finally told us that he hated his ears. They stuck out, kids made fun of him, and he was ugly. There wasn't any truth to any of this but it was very real to him. He was struggling in school and we told him that, as a graduation present, we would pay for otoplasty (ear pinning) if it was that important to him. We figured even though we weren't seeing it, it was worth it if it was affecting his life to that degree. He had the otoplasty and everything was great...for about three weeks. Then when he would look in the mirror, which was all the time, he was unhappy with the job the surgeon did, his ears still were huge, and he needed otoplasty revision. I made the comment to him, "If you do anything more to your ears, they will look like Michael Jackson's nose." When I said that a little bell went off in my head. I remember reading about some strange disorder it was believed that Michael Jackson suffered from. So, I began googling Michael Jackson, disorder, anything I could think of. It finally took me to a website about Body Dysmorphic Disorder. When I read the symptoms I told my husband, "Oh my gosh, this is Erik!" The disorder had begun to take over his life.



Erik writes:

It is estimated that two to three million people have the disorder. It is an Obsessive Compulsive Spectrum Disorder. It is a psychiatric illness where there is a preoccupation with an imagined or slight defect in appearance. The preoccupation and intrusive thoughts that won't go away can take over someone's life and causes a great deal of distress. The disorder can be focused on many parts of the body; skin, eyes, and hair are common. My focus was on my ears, hair and the way I looked, or thought I looked. People with BDD have a Broken Mirror because what their brain perceives is not accurate. It is very distorted but very real to them. I dealt with major depression and anxiety when I finally was diagnosed with BDD. The only break I got from my intrusive thoughts

was when I was sleeping and I struggled with sleep at night.

Phyllis writes:

It was almost more like a sense of relief that there was a name for what was happening to him. I didn't know anything about mental illness so my thought was "Good. Now we know what is wrong we will just so fix it." I had no idea how few mental health providers know about the disorder, or how to treat it.

After seven months I basically gave the insurance company the names of the therapists he would be seeing and told them that my son is nothing more than a name on a piece of paper with a diagnosis to them. But he is my son, and I know far better than they what he needs. I simply did not take no for an answer. Not that I was told no; I just didn't accept it. I just wasn't going away and I wasn't giving up. They did a single case contract so he could attend the intensive outpatient clinic. I can't say that I felt that God was present but I began praying like I had never prayed before hoping I would get an answer. It was everything that transpired after that when I knew God was present. That is when I discovered Swedenborg and came to realize God was present in everything. So many things happened that

I had no control over it had to be Divine Providence. ...

So, I asked for God to heal my son. I also prayed that he could guide us to the proper mental health professionals.

Erik writes:

To make a long story short, I was able to get a proper diagnosis and treatment from some of the best therapists and psychiatrists in the field. Therapy was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. The recovery took me about a year and a half. I have now gone from not even leaving my house to taking acting classes, boxing, am active in my church and youth group and have gone back to college.

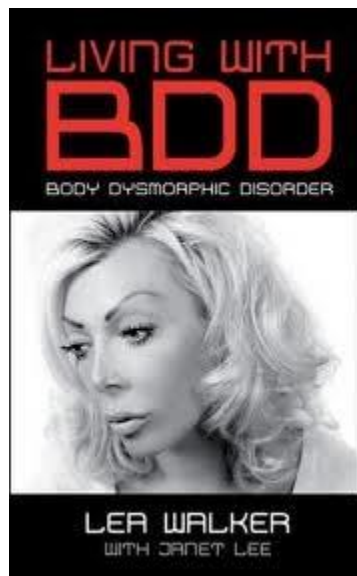
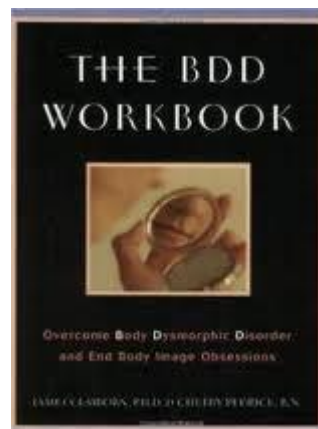


Phyllis:

At first, when I would pray for God to heal Erik, I would pray repeatedly asking for the same thing. Like I said, sometimes I wanted to say, "Hey, is anybody listening?" I seriously started searching the Bible for answers. I read Mark 11: 23-26 and Matthew 21:12 and started thinking maybe I am being selfish here, always asking God for something. Why do I keep asking him for the same thing? Am I really not expecting an answer? Maybe there is something in all of this that is being asked of me but I'm not listening. I just keep asking away. Then I started to change the way I prayed. It was more like a conversation with God. Conversations are best when there are two participants and both also listen.

Erik:

I believe it is very important to help others who are struggling with mental disorders. I have met many more people who are struggling and feel hopeless. Hopefully, my story will inspire them. I tell them to just remember, "Don't give up, don't ever give up." There is help and there is hope.



Phyllis:

I was given all the tools to help Erik myself and get him the professional help he needed. All I had to do was ask. However, Erik had to do the hard work but I would ask God to give him the will and the ability to succeed. That He did. At the OCD convention there was a seminar on how important it is to help others which, in return, you are actually helping yourself. One of these presenters has a book about "The Greater Good" which focuses on the importance of taking your experience and using it to help others. It was when he began reaching out to help others than he realized how much better he himself was doing.

There is a book by Jeff Bell - When in Doubt, Make Belief, which deals with how he faces the 'doubt bully' of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, every day.

So, what constitute such a Greater Good choice? In my experience, the answer inherently involves objectives bigger than myself and my doubts. This choice must offer me, in some concrete way, the opportunity to be of service to others,

enhance my own sense of purpose, or both. In practice, the notion of service is clear enough: doing something, big or small, to empower others in some constructive way.

This moving story by Phyllis and Erik has two main themes:

1. Use of prayer for healing: Phyllis shares her deep and inspiring experiences with prayer. She moved from a place of asking God for things, to having a conversation with God.
2. Reaching out to help others heal: Both Phyllis and Erik have become active in helping sufferers with B.D.D. and their families and friends. It seems to help them stay centered in their own healing when they help others. Many say that that Alcoholics Anonymous was founded after one alcoholic, Bill, became sober. He realized that he could not stay sober alone. He could only stay sober by reaching out a helping hand to another alcoholic. Bill reached out a hand to Dr. Bob, and thereby truly began his own recovery.



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Swedenborg also tells us that we create our eternal life not by what we believe, but by what we do. It is the every-day performing of acts of love towards others that helps us create heaven on earth and prepare ourselves for heaven after this life.

Eric and Phyllis are living this doctrine. Erik's healing was greatly helped by prayer. Now, both Erik and Phyllis reach out their hands to others impacted by BDD. Through these actions, they perform the sacred acts of "uses."

PRAYER

Dear God,

"May today there be peace within. May you trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith in yourself and others. May you use the gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content with yourself just the way you are. Let this knowledge settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us." ..."

— Mother Teresa

AMEN

[Rev. Judith](#)



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

Where is Woody?

September 4, 2011

READINGS

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3

9 What does the worker gain from his toil? 10 I have seen the burden God has laid on men. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. 13 That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. 14 I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.

Swedenborg:

Everyone in heaven is engaged in his or her work according to its correspondence, and the correspondence is not with the work itself but with the use of each particular task (see above, §112); and everything has a correspondence (§106). When we are engaged in an activity or a task in heaven that does answer to its use, then we are in a state of life very much like the one we were in in this world. This is because what is spiritual and what is natural act as one by means of their correspondence, but with the difference that [after death] we enjoy a deeper delight because we are engaged in a spiritual life. This is a deeper life, and therefore more open to heavenly blessedness.
Heaven & Hell #394 NCE

MESSAGE

Where is Woody?

Labor Day Week-end in Kennebunk, Maine. I begin the week-end as I do most week-ends in the summer; at the Farmer's Market in the center of town. I carry my little dog Daisy around my shoulder in a doggie sling carrier as we stroll down the lanes of booths. There are dogs everywhere, and Daisy barks happily when she sees a friend. There are children running, families strolling, individuals stopping to chat with the vendors. It is clear that we are moving into the fall season. There is little lettuce or summer squash, but the winter squashes are available, peaches are ripe, and the early apple crop is everywhere.



There is a special treat this day: a live band playing! Daisy and I stop by to listen to [Coco & Lafe](#). [with their Beagle Lilla.]. Laif [Dutton] said, "We love being here at the [Farmer's Market](#), especially on Labor Day Week-end. We have to include something by Woody Guthrie." Woody! I came of age with the singing of Peter, Paul, and Mary; and the folk music of Woody Guthrie. I loved that the words to his songs had so much meaning, and they usually addressed an important social issue. He especially wrote songs about a vital issue of his day: the struggle to form labor unions.



Lafe played Woody's *Pastures of Plenty* about the migrant farm workers. [The song



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is played at the start of today's service at the top of the page.] Woody's granddaughter Anna Canoni said this about the song:

It was written about the Columbia River. And it's about migrants - it's all about the country. It's a very big song. It's very general in certain respects, and very specific in other respects. But it's all about traveling across the country, and it's about working the land and owning the land based on your work and your labor, not on money and paper. And it's a feeling, a sense of the wonderful feeling that you work this land and that you take pride in it, and therefore you will fight for it. It's not about; I own this property so I want to keep it. It's much deeper than that. It's a beautiful song.

After the powerful song I said to Lafe, *Where is Woody today when we need him so much? Labor unions are under attack, so many are unemployed.*

He replied: *If Woody were around today, he'd be playing at Farmer's Markets and singing about the workers.*

I responded, *Well, we don't have Woody, but we have you and musicians like you who still sing about the workers.*

Then he told me that next year is the 100th anniversary of Woody's birth and there will be many celebrations!



Why do we have Labor Day?

The first Labor Day was celebrated on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City by the Central Labor Union. The Central Labor Union held its second Labor Day holiday just a year later, on September 5, 1883.

By 1884, many considered the first Monday in September to be a "workingmen's holiday." The idea spread as labor organizations grew, and by 1885 Labor Day was celebrated in many cities around the country. Within ten years, most states had passed a bill to honor the holiday, and in 1894, congress made it a federal holiday.



What did Swedenborg have to say about labor?

Swedenborg said that **how** we do our work is more important than **what** we do. Psychologist Wilson Van Dusen gives this example of Swedenborg's approach:

We have two shoe repairmen, both making a living at their trade. One has as his aim the making the most money. He cuts corners on materials and workmanship. He has to grind out as many repairs as possible. The 2nd also is concerned with profit, but he enjoys meeting customers, talking of shoe problems, and he enjoys his craft. The aim of the first is his profit above the customer's welfare. The aim of the 2nd is profit through the customer's welfare. This is the difference between hell and heaven. [Uses: A Way of Personal & Spiritual Growth]

And just what happens in Heaven? What does one do there? Swedenborg says:

Everyone there does something specifically useful, for the Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of uses. ...

There is a dominant love that remains with each of us after death and never changes to eternity.

Heaven & Hell, #239

What does that mean for us on earth? Van Dusen says: *People serving their greatest use will also be enjoying themselves*

and Swedenborg wrote: *Use invites pleasure. It is, however, granted to interrupt labors by various things that are done in the company of others; these things are recreations, and thus they are uses also.* Swedenborg, AE1194 [2]

Labor Day week-end is a good time for us to consider what Swedenborg wrote about our work and it's usefulness. No matter what we are doing, we can do it with an attitude of service to others.

We must take time from our work for recreation; this, too, is "use."

In heaven, Swedenborg says, we will all do what our deepest passions call us to do; our "ruling loves." What are your deepest yearnings about how to serve the world? Perhaps you can't make your living by following your yearnings. Sadly, many people cannot do both. Woody Guthrie followed his passions, but he was dirt poor and could not support his family. If you cannot earn a living with your passions, is there some way you can bring the work you love into your life; perhaps as a hobby or volunteer effort?



No matter what work you do, you can strive to do it with an attitude of love for others and of being useful in the world.

Where is Woody today? I think Woody is in everyone who is striving to make the world better. He is in the hearts of countless people who sing his songs to get through both hard and happy times of life. Is there any music or poetry or art that sustains you in your hard times as well as happy times?

Let us pray.

Beloved God, thank you for this day and everyday that we dwell with you. Help us to understand the breath and depth of Love so that we may share it with all your children. Keep us ever mindful of your presence and your will for us. Thank you for your protection and care. As we go through the present trials of our country, help us to remember that we are one nation under God. Help us to remember to laugh, to look at the beauty around us, and be thankful for our families, our friends, our homes, our jobs, and your guidance. Help us to prosper as a church, a community, and a nation.

AMEN.

[m. judith vandergrift](mailto:m.judith.vandergrift)

Ten Years Later: Is Healing Possible?

September 11, 2011

Readings

From the Bible:

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

From Swedenborg:

Secrets of Heaven, #8455

Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads towards an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him he is at peace, since he fears nothing and no anxiety about things to come disturbs him. How far a person attains this state depends on how far he attains love to the Lord.

MESSAGE

Ten Years Later: Is Healing Possible?

Where were you on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001? Of course, if you are under ten, you weren't born yet. If you're just a little older than ten, you're probably too young to remember. The rest of us will never forget.

I want to focus on one person, looking at what that morning was like for him, and how it changed his life forever.

John Titus lives in Dexter, Michigan. On the morning of 9-11-01 he was driving to work through country roads lined with trees. He was thinking about the gorgeous cloudless blue sky.

On days such as this I often say a silent prayer in appreciation for such radiance and glory. It comes from Psalm 118: “This is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” I completed the forty-five minute drive to work and felt invigorated by the splendor of the morning. p. 18

He went into a routine staff meeting and was startled when another staff member barged in turning the TV on, saying a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. John watched in horror as flames arose from the World Trade Center, and then he saw another plane crash into the other tower. The people at the staff meeting talked for a bit about the horrible tragedy. One said that the planes seemed to be American Airlines. Another commented that one could be United Airlines.

I felt a jolt of fear surge through my body with this unthinkable possibility, but denial would serve to protect me for a little while longer. p. 1

John's wife, Bev, was back at home and had just gotten up. She had been awakened around 8:42 thinking she heard the voice of her eldest child, Alicia, crying for help. But that was crazy – Alicia was in Boston working as a flight attendant for United Airlines.



Bev felt an urge to turn on the TV, where she saw flight #175 fly into the 2nd tower. She was horrified, and she felt a deep sense of despair and hopelessness. She tried to get ready for work, but couldn't stop thinking about her daughter. P. 19



Alicia had tried very hard to get the day off as her young nephew would be at her parents' home. But she didn't have the seniority to switch flights. She had only recently left the corporate world to have more people contact as a stewardess. She was saving money to get a post-graduate degree in teaching.

John, back at work, found that that *something was amiss deep in my soul.*

He was startled by the ringing of his private phone, and picked it up to hear his youngest sister, Jodi. *Have you heard from Lash?* She asked in panic. John hadn't, but was reassuring. What are the odds that Alicia was on that particular plane? Later, Jodi called again. She had talked with Alicia's roommate in San Francisco. Alicia was on flight #175. However, there still was not confirmation that that was the flight that flew into the tower.

John felt a cloud of hopelessness descend around him, as he went into the worse fear a parent could have. It was unthinkable that one of his children would be killed. It was beyond what he could bear in life.

Bev got a call from Greg, Alicia's boyfriend. He was certain Alicia's flight was still in the air, and somewhere over Indiana. That was a relief, but the anxiety became too much to bear alone. Bev went to be with John for awhile in the office. But by 11:00, they both left for home – knowing that they had to be there. On the drive home, John was oblivious to the beautiful blue sky.

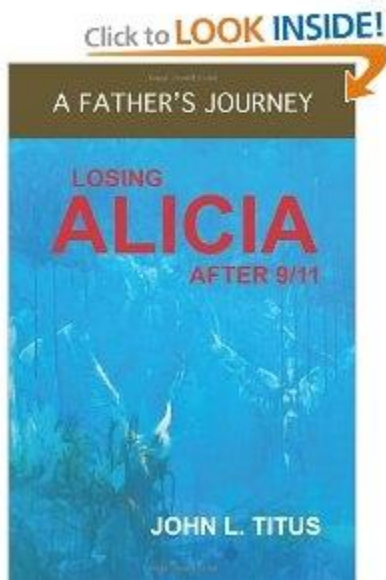
As they walked into the house, the phone was ringing. It was their son Zac. For some reason, United Airlines had his phone number for family contact. They told him that Alicia had been on flight #175 and that it had crashed into the World Trade Center.

All I remember is feeling an overwhelming sense of panic and grief as he announced the dreaded news. We cried out with deep, agonized sobs. Our world had just exploded into a million pieces, just like the remains of my dear, sweet Alicia. P. 22

The rest of that day was a blur for John. There were people to call, relatives to welcome. A woman named Sandra showed up from United Airlines and took care of all the arrangements for arriving family.

That evening emails went out to Swedenborgians that one of our own had just perished.

TEN YEARS LATER



How has John dealt with this personal tragedy over the past ten years? We are fortunate that he tells us. He has just published his book: *Losing Alicia: A Father's Journey After 9/11*.

What follows is based on his book. His direct quotes are in italics.

John has been changed forever, and will grieve forever. Yet, there are many ways he has found peace for his wounded soul. At the end of his book, he writes:

Peace is not something we can kill our way into. Peace is not a place we can come to through the ego mind. Peace is the presence of the Divine within each of us; it's a feeling of interrelatedness in which we feel the interconnection of all life with God. Is peace attainable in the midst of abounding confusion, chaos, hate, and animosity? Not if we allow fear to direct our course. Not if we make decisions that feed the ego's need for power and greed. Not if we continue on the path of destruction. I have been shown a deep abiding peace, even in the midst of tragedy. If I can find inner peace, anyone can. But, even with an abiding peace, continual effort and thoughtful intent. Pp. 151-152

Here are some of the ways John has found inner peace:

EXPRESSING DEEP FEELINGS:

He writes that *when the shock faded, I realized that I had to face the music: the only way to deal with this all-consuming grief was to travel through its very heart. Some may delay the grieving process but eventually we must learn to cope—and it's an agonizing journey. I knew that grief work would take some time. P. 3*

He says that *the only way to get through grief is to go through its very heart to feel the painful feelings; to cry the tears of sadness.*

At another point he says: *grief forces us to experience feelings that seem too tender, too raw, and far too painful. No one wants to feel so exposed and utterly helpless, whatever the potential for spiritual growth. My family and I didn't have a choice in the matter...*

JOURNAL

John kept a journal. He wrote in it every day for the first year of his grieving.

My journal became a place where I could process my thoughts and feelings, an escape from the haunting pain.

Keeping a journal during this difficult time in my life served as means to process mentally, as an outlet for the barrage of emotions that were utterly confusing and completely overwhelming, and as a way of gauging my progress (or regress). Whenever I would write or reread what I had written, I would cry painful, ugly, beautiful, healing tears until there were none left. Weeping like this was hard for me, for I had been taught that "men don't cry." P. 4

NATURE

I spent a lot of time alone out in nature communing with God. ...

Bev and I hiked up to Peach Mountain near our home, a place where I often go running, hiking, and mountain biking. ... At times like these I am most connected with the Divine—I commune with God.... I love it all. I love running in the freshly fallen snow, the bursting forth of new life in the spring, the hot summer days when the strong smell of the pine trees entices me, and, in the fall, running along the path of multicolored leaves with the pungent smell of decay in the air. On this day I barely noticed any of these things, though autumn was in its glory. I ran along the path as hard as I could until I couldn't run anymore. The tears streamed down my cheeks and clouded my eyes. As I ran, I wept. 2

SEEKING ANSWERS:

He found that as he grieved, he had more and more questions about the 9/11 attack.

It soon became quite clear to Bev and me that answers to our questions about the murder of our daughter were not going to come easily. There was much more taking place behind the scenes—political maneuvering and the pursuit of hidden agendas of those in power, the leaders of our own government—that we weren't being told about. I soon found myself on a mission to understand all there was to know about the 9/11 attack and its underlying causes. P. 6

I knew that I had to learn the truth about why Alicia was murdered.

ACTIVISM:

What John learned turned him into a social activist. He was involved in [Sept. 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows](#)

and participated in numerous events for peace. He travelled to give talks on the difference between vengeance and justice.

I didn't feel hatred or vengeance. I couldn't see how that would aid my grieving, bring about any sense of justice or closure

Some might think that losing a child at the hands of a radical group of religious fanatics would predispose us to an "eye for an eye" response, that we would want vengeance for the murder of our daughter. But it's much more complicated than that. Did justice for those responsible? Absolutely. But more killing of innocent people in our daughter's name? Absolutely not. P. 6

He developed a clear sense of what justice meant to him. What does that justice look like? Do we wage all-out war, ensuring the destruction of everyone and everything surrounding the perpetrators and devastating two countries in the process? Do we create another "crusade" against the terrorists, as President Bush so clumsily put it? Or could America have collaborated with the world community after the September 11 attack, engaged in a concerted effort with those countries that expressed empathetic allegiance to us at the time, and through our collaborative efforts, brought those responsible for this heinous crime to justice in an international court of law? This is what many of the victims' families suggested immediately after our loved ones were murdered. P. 8

CONNECTION TO GOD

He never felt that God had abandoned him, or that God had a grand plan that involved the murder of his daughter. Nor did he believe that suffering was a punishment from God. He knew that evil happened out of the free choice given to all of us.

I also realized that I needed to renew my relationship with God and find peace in my soul.

My prayers became desperate pleas for help. ..

Each morning I would awaken early to meditate, pray, read, write, cry, and go out into nature to regenerate. This

TURNING TO SWEDENBORG:

Swedenborg proclaimed that through our uses in society, guided by our love and understanding of the divine, we fulfill God's will for us. By stepping outside of our selfish love and learning to give unconditionally to one another, we act in accordance with God's principles. God is love. God is truth. P. 88

If we sense the interconnection of all life, we begin to conceive of justice (a concept very different from vengeance) as being universal and divine. Does it not make sense that what we do to the least of these we also do to ourselves and to God? P. 73

Let's think today about John and Bev Titus – and all of the families who lost loved ones on 9-11-01. Is healing possible for them and for all of us? We will never forget; we will never stop our search for answers and our grieving for those lost. However, we can find peace in our souls again. John Titus is an excellent model in how to do this.



Inspiration and Prayer
by Rev. Judith

I have been thinking about Father Mychal Judge, who was killed while doing his job that he loved at the World Trade Center. He was chaplain to the firefighters that were called there that day. Fr. Mychal was beloved by all who met him, from the homeless on the streets of New York to the President of the United States. He was a Franciscan Friar who served all with his huge heart and winning smile. Here is the prayer he gave for the families of flight 800 that went down with all aboard a few years before 9/11. It seems fitting still, as we as individuals and as a nation remember and mourn.

"God is present loving, smiling having received our loved ones. They are in his presence, illumined by his smile and warmed by his love. His kingdom is enriched this day, so enriched, by so many beautiful souls, so much beauty. Our world is so empty without them, our hearts are broken, our sadness immense, our tears so abundant, our sorrow we live together. We need You, please come and touch us. Fill us with courage, calm our discomfort. Give us signs of your presence, we ask you, we beg you come."
AMEN

And the Mystery Is

September 18, 2011

Readings

From the Bible:

Psalm 13

The Message (MSG)

A David Psalm

1-2 Long enough, God— you've ignored me long enough.
I've looked at the back of your head
long enough. Long enough
I've carried this ton of trouble,
lived with a stomach full of pain.
Long enough my arrogant enemies
have looked down their noses at me.

3-4 Take a good look at me, God, my God;
I want to look life in the eye,
So no enemy can get the best of me
or laugh when I fall on my face.

5-6 I've thrown myself headlong into your arms—
I'm celebrating your rescue.
I'm singing at the top of my lungs,
I'm so full of answered prayers.

From Swedenborg:

We may gather how important it is to have a right concept of God from the fact that this concept is the very core of the thinking of anyone who has a religion. All the elements of religion and of worship focus on God; and since God is involved in every element of religion and worship, whether general or particular, unless there is a right concept of God there can be no communication with heaven. This is why every nation is allotted its place in the spiritual world according to its concept of a human God. This [understanding of God as human] is where the concept of the Lord is to be found, and nowhere else.

DLW, NCE, 13a

MESSAGE

And the Mystery Is?

Rev. Jane Siebert

A good friend of mine shared an amazing story with me last week and I would like to share it with you.



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My friend and his wife went to Pennsylvania for a week of Native American Tracking School. People from all over the world go there to learn about Native American philosophy, spirituality and the ceremonial ways of Indians in North America.

He told me he had a question answered while he was there that he had been asking for 50 years and the answer had brought healing to his soul.

One of the things they were instructed to do was to carve a pipe bowl out of soapstone or another soft stone. Native Americans are very particular about their pipes; they are sacred items for use in ceremonies. Each participant in the tracking school was to look carefully on walks through the forested areas to discern the shape for their pipe bowl. My friend became aware of mushrooms throughout the forest and decided that his pipe bowl should be shaped like a mushroom. Now, while soapstone is relatively soft for a stone, it still takes a lot of work and time smoothing the edges and getting it to just the right shape. So he worked on it off and on throughout the week and it was always with him. In fact he is still working on it.

Towards the end of the week, they were instructed to find a space in the forest where they were alone and would not be disturbed and work on their pipes. My friend wandered down a path, deep into the forest and found a little clearing where he sat down with his back against a tree. He took out his pipe bowl and was holding it up to look at the shape when to his amazement he saw a mushroom in the distance, directly in his line of sight, behind the pipe he was holding. It was the exact shape he had been working on and the outline of his pipe bowl and the mushroom were identical. He was struck to the core of his being. He wept openly and his tears turned to sobs and deep sighs. For the first time in his life he did not feel alone. He felt a connection to the earth, to others, and to something beyond himself, call it God, Spirit, Oneness, whatever, but for the first time for him, "It" was real and "It" cared about him.

The question he had asked some 50 years ago was when he was sitting in a Methodist church as a teenager. He sat there in that church and asked God where He was. Did he matter to God? Did God care about him? And he heard nothing that day. And for the next 50 years he heard nothing from God. He married, raised a family, was a good worker, and all this time he had felt a hole, a deep loneliness, a separation...and that unanswered question.....

Tears came to my eyes as I listened – as they do today. What a powerful story. He was finally ready to hear and receive the response from God that God had been trying to get through for 50 years. What a blessing. What healing came to him. And what pain my friend had endured for 50 years, waiting to find God in a way through which he could relate. He had looked for God in church; he had looked for God in the Bible; he had looked for God through meditation, through conversations with others. He had in his mind what he was looking for and it was not until he gave up that image that he could find God in the image of that mushroom.

Please think with me a minute about how you envision God and if your understanding of God is healing or hurtful to your soul. Take a minute to walk with David as he poured out his heart to God as recorded in the 13th Psalm and given in The Message. *Italics, mine.*

1-2 Long enough, God— you've ignored me long enough.. I've looked at the back of your head long enough. Long enough. I've carried this ton of trouble, lived with a stomach full of pain. Long enough my arrogant enemies have looked down their noses at me.

3-4 take a good look at me, God, my God; I want to look life in the eye, so no enemy can get the best of me or laugh when I fall on my face.

(And then it is like David gets his answer, just as my friend did.)

5-6 I've thrown myself headlong into your arms— I'm celebrating your rescue. I'm singing at the top of my lungs, I'm so full of answered prayers.

I believe that God continues to try to get through to us for as long as it takes and by any method that it takes. If we but listen, open our eyes, open our ears, open our hearts... and sometimes, sometimes, we have to let go of the confining image of God we have and just be open.

Swedenborg states: It is important to have the right idea (or understanding) of God. Our idea of God exists in the inmost of our being and is the basis of our religion and worship. Our idea of God affects everything about us (and how we see the world).

I am reading a book by Marcus Borg, a renowned theological scholar, called, "Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power and How They Can Be Restored."

The chapters I want to share today are "God" and "God's Character". We all have a concept of God whether we say we believe in God or not. An atheist has to have an idea of what he/she does not believe in, just like you and I. When I worked in the hospital and someone would say, "I don't want a chaplain; I don't believe in God." I would ask them to tell me about the God they don't believe in and they described this separate being –out-there that they couldn't relate to.

The author points out that there are *"two very different understandings of ... God in the Christian tradition, beginning in the Bible and coexisting in Christianity ever since. For the first, God refers to a being beyond the universe...a Supreme Being, almighty, and all-knowing. A long time ago this being created the universe, and God and the universe are related to each other as the artist to the art, furniture maker to furniture, designer to product. They are separate from each other, even as the latter is the product of the former.*

For the second, the word God does not refer to a being separate from the universe, but to a sacred presence all around us... God is not a being "somewhere else" (up there, or out there, or beyond), but "right here" as well as "more than right here".

Think about which understanding you carry of God. The first is actually the most common meaning in modern English and many Christians think of God this way. Even dictionary definitions most often describe God as a supreme *being, often a male deity.*

When one has the idea of God as a "separate being" there are often person-like characteristics perceived in God.

- A. One who thinks, wills, feels, acts, loves, cares and commonly judges and punishes.
- B. An authority figure that reveals what is right and wrong, what we are to believe and judges how we are doing. We try to "please" God.
- C. God relates to us through intervention. We pray for God to do this or that. Many passages in the Bible support this view with stories of God changing his mind when petitioned by people. Current politics are full of this type of language for God.
- D. God is referred to with male pronouns.

- E. God is real and one can argue about the existence of nonexistence of God. Believers agree this Supreme Being exists and non-believers do not.

The other image of God is very different – God is a presence, an encompassing sacred reality all around us and within us. This image is also supported with scripture. In Acts 17:28 God is “the one in whom we live and move and have our being”.

Borg says with this image: *“We are in relation to God and God is in relation with us. We are in God. We live within God. We move within God. We have our being within God.”*

God is not a being far off, somewhere beyond the universe, separate from us and the world, Rather God is the one in whom everything exists and within everything that exists and can reach us through all of life” – including mushrooms.

The 139th Psalm asks: “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” Then the Psalmist affirms God’s presence everywhere: “If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol (the depths of the earth) you are there. If I settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.” Psalm 139:8-10

Borg goes on: *“Seeing and relating to God as a presence all around and within radically changes the question of God’s existence. There is no longer an argument about whether there is a separate being God but rather is there a sacredness in one’s reality. Is there a “more-than” or is what one sees and experiences all there is”.*

This is a whole different question at a different level that is more about the individual than about “God”. We need to spend time thinking about what our personal God is like because it shapes how we live and relate to others.

The questions at the end of this message are random questions that came to my mind as I thought about God. There are not necessarily right and wrong answers. The important thing is to take time to question what we believe about God and why. Great healing can come from our idea of a loving God that is always trying to get through to us and open our eyes to God. Just like my friend and the mushroom.

He asked, “Where are you God?” for 50 years. The answer was right before him and when he was ready, God replied, “...and the mystery is that Christ lives in you.” (Colossians 1:27) And that is a healing gift.

Some questions to ponder:

Where is God?

Do you feel that God cares about you personally?

Have you felt God’s presence?

Has your idea of God changed over the years?

Do you trust God? Why?

When you pray, what name do you use for God?

Do you feel like you are praying to a male God?

Does God help you? How?

Do you think God punishes people?

Do you work hard to please God? Why?

Do you feel God is happy with you?

Have you ever felt that God was mad at you?

What are the most important characteristics of God?

Compassionate	Judgmental
Love	All knowing
All powerful	Everywhere present
Grace	Forgiving
Angry	Friend
Caring	Indifferent

Inspiration and prayer for 9/18/11

I have been focused on Mark 9:23 this week. "If you can?", said Jesus, "Everything is possible for him who believes."

What are you believing? So much negative information is out and about that I find myself thinking negative thoughts . I do not want to spend my thinking life on those things, so I focus on the Lord, and work on a positive thought to replace the negative one. We often hear that what we focus on expands. "As a man thinketh so is he." I invite you to join us In the change your thinking club, if you are being swayed to the "Ain't It Awful Group." Happy Thinking!

Dear Lord, keep my mind focused on you and what is wonderful in Life. Let me see the greatness of Your Love for all. When I am tempted to focus on the problem rather than the solution, help me to change my thinking. I believe in you Lord, and I believe in the Promises that You have given to all your children. When I am weary and think I cannot go on, let me remember "If God be for me, who can be against me?" Thank you for the challenges in my life and in my country, they help me to be strong and to understand others. Thank you for Your Blessings each day, may we count them each night with gratitude. AMEN

With Love and Blessings,
[Rev Judith](#)

Sun & Seeds to Cider

September 25, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples: if you love one another. (John 13:34, 35)

From Swedenborg:

The goal of creation is a heaven of angels from the human race; so human beings are the goal of creation. All other created things are intermediate goals. Since all of them relate to humanity, they focus on these three aspects: our bodies, our rationality, and our spirituality--which looks toward our union with the Lord.

We cannot be united with the Lord without being spiritual, nor can we be spiritual without being rational, nor can we be rational without being in a state of physical wholeness. It is like a house: our body is like the foundation, our rationality is like the structure of the house built on it, and our spirituality is like the furnishings of the house. Living in the house is being united with the Lord. (Divine Love and Wisdom #330)

MESSAGE

Sun & Seeds to Cider
Rev. Wilma

Uh, your religion is WHAT?

Swedenborgian. We honor the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. We're also known as the New Church.

Never heard of you.

*I sighed. I had had this conversation so many times with so many people. Now, on a gorgeous fall day at the Kennebunk Farmer's Market, I was standing in the midst of booths teeming with local produce. The most popular items today were apples, apple pie, and apple cider. *You've heard of Johnny Appleseed, haven't you?**

Of course!

Johnny was a Swedenborgian. He was one of the first Swedenborgians in this country. In a way, he was a Swedenborgian missionary, giving out apple seeds and loaning people chapters from Swedenborg's books.

WHAT! I love Johnny Appleseed. I thought I knew everything about him. But I NEVER knew about his religion!

This person is not alone. This week-end in Maine, our country roads are full of farm stands teeming with apples and cider. In Ft. Wayne, Indiana, people are gathering for the annual Johnny Appleseed Festival. Yet, few people know the full story of Johnny's amazing life. Did you know that Johnny Appleseed was a Swedenborgian on a mission? Did you know that his birthday is Sept. 26?

Let's go back in time

.... To Leominster, Massachusetts, on September 26, 1774. A baby was born to Elizabeth and Nathaniel



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Chapman. They named their son "John." Less than a year later, he was baptized in the Congregational Church. When John was two, his mother died, so John and his sister were raised by relatives while their father served in the Continental army. Later their father re-married and had ten more children.

When John was 18 [in 1792], he felt a strong yearning to "go west", and persuaded his half-brother Nathaniel to join him in the adventure. He took on the profession of "nurseryman." Along the way, he encountered the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg [who had died in 1772]. The very first General Convention of our denomination was in Philadelphia in 1817. Shortly before this first convention convened, there was a fascinating article in a Swedenborgian newsletter from England:

There is in the western country a very extraordinary missionary of the New Jerusalem. A man has appeared who seems to be almost independent of corporeal wants and sufferings. He goes barefooted, can sleep anywhere, in house or out of house, and live upon the coarsest and most scanty fare. He has actually thawed ice with his bare feet. He procures what books he can of the New Church Swedenborg, travels into the remote settlements, and lends them wherever he can find readers, and sometimes divides a book into two or three parts for more extensive distribution and usefulness. This man for years past has been in the employment of bringing into cultivation, in numberless places in the wilderness, small patches (two or three acres) of ground, and then sowing apple seeds and rearing nurseries. These become valuable as the settlements approximate, and the profits of the whole are intended for the purpose of enabling him to print all the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and distribute them through the western settlements of the United States."

John became active in Ohio, where the government was giving land grants to people from Canada and Nova Scotia who had fought on our side in the Revolutionary War. Johnny was planting trees before settlers even arrived. He continued westward, planting trees, just ahead of the wave of immigration.

As an elderly man, he returned home to Ohio in 1842. He died there 3 years later, and was buried near Ft. Wayne.

It is fascinating to know that Johnny Appleseed was a Swedenborgian. But the real story is not what he believed; it is how he lived his life. What was there about Johnny [Chapman] Appleseed's life that exemplifies Swedenborgian theology?

I see 4 central Swedenborgian themes in his life:

1. He lived **both with his heart and his mind**. He learned about his profession and the Van Mons theory of planting fruit as seed rather than grafting. He learned what kind of soil the trees needed, and he would go back often to check on the growth of his trees. Yet all that he did was focused in his love of people and of the Lord. He felt that he was called to be a preacher and healer; to help God care for people on the plains. He also planted medicinal herbs, and often shared them on his journeys. Swedenborg said that both Love and Wisdom are central to life. They represent spirit-matter; God-humanity; heart-mind. We must bring these "dualisms" into oneness in our lives.

2. He was **friend of all**. He learned many Indian languages and was held in high regard by many of the tribes. He cared about the concerns of both the Indian tribes and the white settlers, and often intervened in conflict. He never killed – either people or animals. He lived in complete harmony with nature. "In field and meadow and forest, he walked, concerned with the spacious thoughts of God. The singularity of his thinking and his living was inextricably entwined with his religious views". Swedenborg emphasizes our oneness with all creation; we are part of a web of existence and we contribute to and are nurtured by the whole.

3. His life was **focused on "uses"**. He lived to be of service to others. Yet, he also attended to his own needs and, as always, that inner leading. He made a living, but money was not his motivation. He would accept cash for his trees – or clothing or food or even nothing at all. He never asked a person to pay a debt, for he reasoned that if God wanted him to have the money, God would move the customer to pay.

Besides, the customer knew that he or she owed the money, without being reminded of it. However, he was not poor, and had some assets that he rarely used. Swedenborg tells us that Love and Wisdom must be expressed by our living a life of useful service to others. Johnny saw himself as a minister, and often said he was bringing *good news; fresh from Heaven*.

4. He lived by the **guidance of his inner calling**. Swedenborg tells us that God's Love is always inflowing to our very being and essence. We can connect with the Divine by looking inward, to find the deep guidance at the depth of our soul. For there we find our deepest love and passion; and it is out of this that we live in oneness with God and the world.

What about Johnny can inspire our lives today? How can we celebrate Johnny's birthday this week?

Let us pray.

Here is the Prayer for the week of 9/25/11:

(Written for my Ordination on 7/5/08.)

"May the Lord Bless You with Divine Love and Wisdom.

May your regeneration be pursued with zeal.

May you prosper and grow through out your lives
under the Lord's Direction and Care.

May you go in Peace, serving the world
inspired by Love and guided by Wisdom."

AMEN.

Rev. Judith Vandergriff



Helen Keller's Swedenborgian Life: Pt. 1: Eyes with Vision

October 2, 2011

READINGS

FROM SCRIPTURE

John 9 (New International Version)

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

- 1As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
- 3"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 4As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
- 6Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.
- 8His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" 9Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."
- 10"How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded.
- 11He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

FROM SWEDENBORG

- Before we can learn what is true and be affected by what is good, the things that stand in the way and resist have to be put aside. The old self must die before the new self can be conceived.*
19. *The Spirit of God stands for the Lord's mercy, which is portrayed as moving constantly, like a hen brooding over her eggs. What is being brooded over in this instance is what the Lord stores away in us, which throughout the Word is called "a remnant" [or "survivors"]. It is a knowledge of truth and goodness, which can never emerge into the light of day until our outer nature has been devastated. Such knowledge is here called the face of the water.*
20. *Genesis 1:3. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*
- The first step is taken when we begin to realize that goodness and truth are something transcendent. People who focus exclusively on externals do not even know what is good or what is true; When we are conceived anew, however, we first begin to be aware that our "good" is not good. And as we advance further into the light, it dawns on us that the Lord exists and that he is goodness and truth itself. everything connected with self-love and love of worldly advantages they consider good, and anything that promotes those two loves they consider true. They are unaware that such "goodness" is evil and such "truth" false.*

Heavenly Secrets, NCE

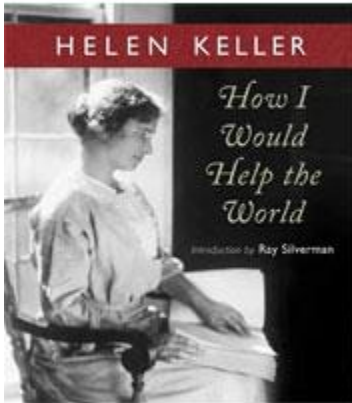
MESSAGE

HELEN KELLER'S SWEDENBORGIAN LIFE



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

Part I: Eyes with Vision



Laurie Klein, a New Church woman, had a dream last year in which a large crowd was begging her to “*help Helen Keller help the world.*” Laurie shared this dream several weeks later at Gathering Leaves, an international conference of Swedenborgian women held in Byrn Athyn, PA. There was excited discussion about a short essay Helen Keller had written as an introduction to Swedenborg’s *True Christianity*. The essay was called *How I Would Help the World*. At one time it had been issued as a pamphlet, but was no longer easy to access. It focused on how Swedenborg influenced Helen Keller’s spiritual development, and her understanding of “uses” in the living of her life.

The Swedenborg Foundation became excited about a project of making this essay widely available. They released a new book earlier this year titled, *How I Would Help the World*, by Helen Keller with an introduction by Ray Silverman, Keller’s New Church biographer. The book contains beautiful photos and artistically-presented Swedenborgian quotes. Herb Ziegler gave a great review of this new release in the April Messenger.

Helen wrote: *The only thing worse than being blind is having eyes but no vision.*” Helen was blind, but she had the inner sight and the vision to see the world through Swedenborgian eyes.

Here are some of the main points Silverman covers in his introduction.

Helen Adams Keller was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, on June 27, 1880.

For nineteen months she was an ordinary child, with a pleasant disposition and a love of life. However, in February 1882, Helen contracted an illness that left her blind and deaf. It has been conjectured that this may have been scarlet fever. She grew up in a dark and silent world.

Captain Arthur Keller and his wife Kate struggled to raise Helen. By six years old, Helen was completely out of control. Her frustrated parents searched for help and eventually were told to contact Alexander Graham Bell. Bell’s mother was deaf, and he married a deaf woman. Bell’s passion was to find ways to help people whose ears did not hear. In his work, he stumbled upon the invention of the telephone, for which he was awarded the distinguished Volta prize of fifty thousand francs—equivalent to about \$200,000 today. In 1880 (the same year that Helen Keller was born) Bell used the prize money to establish the Volta Bureau in Washington, D.C., “for the increase and diffusion of knowledge about the deaf.” He hired John Hitz to serve as the first superintendent of the bureau. At the time, Hitz was living in Washington, D.C., and serving as the consul general for Switzerland. He was also partially deaf. He was also an enthusiastic New Churchman.

In the summer of 1886, Bell hears the pleas for help from the Keller’s, and he agreed to meet Helen and her parents. They met in Washington, D.C., over dinner. Helen sat on Bell’s lap, felt his long beard, and was drawn to his caring nature.

Years later, she wrote, “*I did not dream that interview would be the door through which I should pass from darkness into light.*”

Bell suggested that they hire a tutor from the Perkins School for the Blind in Newton, MA. For many years, the Swedenborg School of Religion was located just a few blocks from the Perkins School. [It is now “The Swedenborgian House of Studies” on the campus of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. The Perkins school recommended twenty-one-year-old teacher Anne Sullivan for Helen. Anne arrived at Helen’s home in 1887, a few months before Helen’s 7th birthday.

Several years later, Helen composed a short story for the birthday of Michael Anagnos, the director of the

Perkins School. Anagnos was delighted with this story, called "The Frost King," and arranged to have it published in a magazine. The story became very popular and was re-issued by other magazines. One reader noted that Helen's story was very similar to a story written seventeen years earlier by Margaret Canby called "The Frost Fairies." Actually, Silverman tells us that whole sentences and paragraphs were almost identical. Much to her surprise and dismay, Helen was accused of plagiarism, and an unpleasant investigation followed.

When she was an adult, Helen wrote: *"No child ever drank deeper of the cup of bitterness than I did. I had disgraced myself. I had brought suspicion on those I loved best."* She longed to die.

When Alexander Graham Bell heard about the incident, he was convinced that Helen was innocent. To prove it, he sent the superintendent of his bureau for the deaf, Swedenborgian John Hitz. Hitz discovered that Helen had an incredible memory. The story, *The Frost Fairies*, had been read to her when she was eight, and it became etched in her subconscious memory. Margaret Canby, the author of *The Frost Fairies* became a strong supporter of Helen.

The friendship between Hitz and Helen deepened. Helen later wrote:

He loved to take me out walking early in the morning while the dew lay upon the grass and tree, and the air was joyous with birdsong. We wandered through still woods, fragrant meadows, past the picturesque stone walls of Wrentham, and always he brought me closer to beauty and the deep meaning of nature. As he talked, the great world shone for me in the beauty of immortality. . . . We would often pause that I might feel the swaying of the trees, the bending of the flowers, and the waving of the corn, and he would say, "The wind that puts all this life into nature is a marvelous symbol of the spirit of God." Throughout their long friendship, Hitz introduced Helen to the great thinkers of the world, and especially to the religious teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. In her gratitude, Helen called Hitz her Pflegevater—"the foster-father of my soul."

When Helen was fourteen, Hitz gave her a copy of Swedenborg's *Heaven & Hell* in Braille. It was an experience of awakening for her that was comparable to her early work with Anne Sullivan, when she realized at the water pump that letters had meaning.

In 1908, John Hitz died of a heart attack at the age of eighty. But he would live on in Helen's memory as the foster-father of her soul, the ministering angel who came to her during the darkest time in her life. The interview with Alexander Graham Bell many years before had indeed been the door through which Helen Keller passed "from darkness into light." However, it was not merely the light of a mental awakening through Anne Sullivan; it was also the light of a spiritual awakening through John Hitz and the inspired teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Helen had many admirers, but one of her greatest was the American author and humorist Mark Twain. Calling her "the wonder of the ages," Twain wrote:

Helen Keller has been dumb, stone deaf, and stone blind, ever since she was a little baby a year-and-a-half old; and now . . . this miraculous creature, this wonder of the ages, passes the Harvard University examination in Latin, German, French history, belles-lettres, and such things, and does it brilliantly, too, not in a commonplace fashion. She doesn't know merely things; she is splendidly familiar with the meanings of them. When she writes an essay on a Shakespearian character, her English is fine and strong, her grasp of the subject is the grasp of one who knows, and her page is electric with light.

Helen did indeed carry the banner of social reform to all and she fought valiantly to raise consciousness about the plight of the handicapped. But Helen's social reform did not stop at combating preventable blindness. She took up many other causes as well; she campaigned for women's right to vote at a time when it was politically incorrect to do so; she became a powerful voice against social injustice; she spoke out boldly against racial prejudice; she decried corrupt politics, denounced business greed, and openly deplored the horrors of war. And yet, she always returned to the needs of the blind and the deaf. On their behalf, she traveled the globe six times, and visited dignitaries in every land. She spoke often and passionately not only about the plight of the handicapped, but also about their potential. In her foot-every human life is precious.



Helen wrote: *Were I but capable of interpreting to others one-half of the stimulating thoughts and noble sentiments that are buried in Swedenborg's writings, I should help them more than I am ever likely to in any other way. It would be such a joy to me if I might be the instrument of bringing Swedenborg to a world that is spiritually deaf and blind.*

In Part II, we'll look more closely at what Helen wrote in her essay about what parts of Swedenborg's writings that she would like to teach the world.

Let us pray.

Inspiration and Prayer for the week of October 2, 2011:

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." For rest from the care of life, you can turn to God each day in prayer and communion. Real relaxation and serenity come from a deep sense of the fundamental goodness of the universe. God's everlasting arms are underneath all and will support you. Commune with God, not so much for petitions to be granted as for the rest that comes from relying on His will and His purposes for your life. BE sure of God's strength available to you, be conscious of His support and wait quietly until that true rest from God fills you're being.

From "Twenty-four Hours a Day", Hazelden

Holy One that is in all life we ask for your Blessing of Holy Rest. To be with us in our lives when we need the quiet of Your stillness, so we may hear your will for our lives. Give us the power to carry out your will. Keep us mindful of our need to rely completely on you, your strength, and your Grace. We ask for the blessing of Your "Peace that passeth all understanding". Thank you Lord, thank you.

AMEN

Love,
Rev. Judith



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

Creating An Orange Sermon

October 16, 2011

READINGS

FROM SCRIPTURE

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

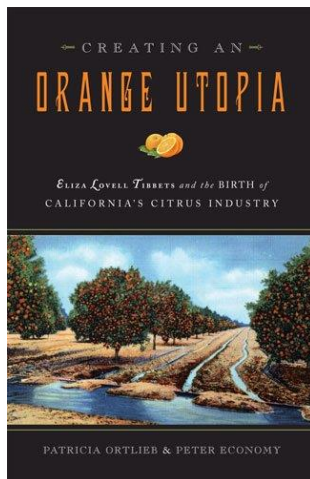
FROM SWEDENBORG

True Christianity #9: 2

In heaven are fragrances from herbs, from various trees, from apples, pears, oranges olives, grapes. There is an odor as from their leaves; as from the various cereals; and the various kinds of wine and must. There is a perfume as from newly baked bread and cakes; as from various flowers; as from various useful trees in groves and forests; as from honey. There is an aroma as from frankincense, and various other ingredients. The sphere of infants, and of the angels, is changed into such perfumes in heaven.

MESSAGE

Creating An Orange Sermon



Ah, it is fall in Maine: my favorite season. This is the time of year I love talking about Johnny Appleseed and how his Swedenborgian life brought so many apple trees to the Midwest and East. Until this week, I didn't realize that another Swedenborgian brought navel oranges to California! I don't know how I'd get through a Maine winter without navel oranges on the grocery shelves. I never knew that I was indebted to yet another Swedenborgian for teaching people how to grow fruit trees.

This is an amazing story that I'd like to share with you. The story is from a new book just released by the Swedenborg Foundation Press: *Creating An Orange Utopia: Eliza Lovell Tibbets and the Birth of California's Citrus Industry*. The book is co-authored by Patricia Ortlieb and Peter Economy. Patricia Ortlieb is a great-great-granddaughter of Eliza Lovell Tibbets. The Mayor of Riverside said in the foreword to the book:

When Patricia's fourth-grade granddaughter wanted to know about Eliza's role in California history, she rather innocently set Patricia on a quest to discover the true story of their illustrious ancestor. More than just "leafing out" this very special branch of the family tree, Patricia wanted to go beyond the legend of Eliza's watering the young orange trees with her dishwater and document the life sojourn of this very remarkable woman. Patricia began by physically going to the places where Eliza had lived, seeking out official records and personal correspondence. Her research is extensive and well documented the writing compelling.

Rev. Carla Friedrich introduced Patricia to her friend of many years, [Peter Economy](#), the best-seller author, co-author, and writer of over 55 books. Together they wrote about the life journey of Eliza Lovell Tibbets.



Eliza Maria Lovell, youngest child of Oliver and Clarissa Downes Lovell, was born in 1823 in Cincinnati the family had come from Boston by covered wagon and river ark in 1812. Cincinnati Swedenborgians had been meeting since 1811, and Oliver and Clarissa were both members of the Cincinnati New Jerusalem Church when it incorporated in 1818—just a year after the General Convention of the New Church had incorporated. Eliza's father was a part-time lay minister who led some of the Swedenborgian services.

The Cincinnati Swedenborgians were active in establishing schools in the area. Eliza probably attended the Bailey sisters' boarding school. The sisters' father, Francis, had published the first Swedenborgian books in the states. The school had an advanced curriculum that included teaching thinking over rote memorizing.

Eliza grew up learning the importance of "uses" and was active in helping the poor and disabled. She was surrounded by the arts, as the Swedenborgian community helped develop interest in music, art, and many civic and cultural projects.

She was also involved in the anti-slavery movement. The co-authors write:

Eliza was exposed early to the struggle over slavery, which was destined to become an important part of her life. Cincinnati was an ideological battleground between North and South. Slaves escaped from Kentucky just across the river and fled through the city to freedom in the North. Harriet Beecher Stowe was inspired to write Uncle Tom's Cabin by her experiences there. Many members of the Ohio New Church were abolitionists. Their opposition to slavery was based in part on Swedenborg's remarks about Africans in his posthumously published short work Last Judgment. According to Swedenborg, the Africans were "... in greater enlightenment than others

on this earth, since they are such that they think more interiorly, and so receive truths and acknowledge them.”

At some point, Eliza and her father both became drawn to Spiritualism. Oliver Lovell was an important Spiritualist leader in Cincinnati. Eliza became known as an accomplished medium.

Eliza fell in love with John Summons, and they were married in 1842. They had several children, but only one, James, survived to adulthood.

Eliza became unhappy with her marriage when she watched her husband become an alcoholic. In 1848 she moved back home with her parents, taking the children.

In 1855 she married James Neal, a commerce merchant who became an active medium. The two of them had a daughter, Clara. Clara died in 1860, and the couple relocated to New York City. Eliza's son from her first marriage, James, moved with them, as well as Oliver Lovell, Eliza's father. James worked as a successful healing medium. They were both active as mediums, and quite involved in the [early spiritualism movement](#).

One of Eliza's clients was Luther Tibbets, who wanted a medium to contact his wife who had recently died. He ended up renting a room from Eliza and Neal.

It seemed that Eliza's second marriage began deteriorating, and she and Luther grew increasingly close. Eliza and Neal divorced in April of 1865, and she and Luther were married in Dec. of that year.

They moved to Fredericksburg, Virginia, soon after the Civil War, and found that their strong abolitionist beliefs and lifestyle made them unpopular. They were treated badly, with Luther's business being ruined. In 1868 they left Virginia and moved to D.C.

They had lost most everything in Virginia, and were forced to start again. Their finances improved considerably and they devoted much of their time to suffrage. They were in Washington in 1869 for the pivotal National Women's Rights Convention.

While in D.C., Eliza was introduced to William Saunders, head of the U.S. Agricultural Department's division of experimental gardens and grounds. Saunders played a significant role in the next part of Eliza's life.

Eliza and Luther had always been interested in utopian societies and had tried unsuccessfully several times to help develop one. They were fascinated with the efforts of John Wesley North to establish a utopian community in California; in the spot that later became Riverside. They were eager to participate. First, Luther went out to help develop the community, and then Eliza joined him.

Their biggest challenge was to find a way of supporting the community. It seemed that growing fruit would be a good endeavor, and a number of experiments were tried. Nothing, however, helped them financially.

Ortlieb and Economy write:

UNBEKNOWNST TO THE EARLIEST settlers of the Riverside colony, in Washington, DC, fourth-generation horticulturalist William Saunders had taken note of a unique variety of orange—a seedless “navel” orange from Bahia, Brazil—that had been sent to his office at the US Agricultural

Department (later the Department of Agriculture). The origins of the navel orange can be traced to the province of Goa in India, which was a Portuguese possession for approximately 450 years. Trade brought the tree to Portugal, where it was known as Selecta for the high quality of its fruit ...

These oranges were seedless, so were propagated by cuttings. Saunders arranged for two cuttings to be sent to Eliza in Riverside at her request.

The cuttings thrived in Riverside's warm and dry climate, and they grew into California's two "parent navel orange trees." Luther Tibbets developed a lucrative business selling buds from the trees for others to start trees. As the author's write:



The parent trees became so valuable that Luther was forced to erect a high fence topped with barbed wire to keep out hungry animals and potential budwood thieves. Ironically, the orange gold rush that was soon to come mostly passed by Luther and Eliza. Instead of planting groves of oranges as did many of his neighbors, Luther contented himself with selling the buds of the Parent Navel Orange Trees for \$1 each, quite a sum at the time for a small—less than one-half inch in length—piece of wood. While this might while been a lucrative business in the short run, it was not sustainable, because once a grower obtained a navel orange tree he could grow and propagate as many of his own buds as he wanted. However, Luther may have been motivated by ongoing financial difficulties to seek out quick money rather than long-term. [The photo at the left is of the Parent Navel and Eliza's Marker today]



Eliza also continued her work as a medium in Riverside. In 1874, Swedenborgian minister Calvin Day Noble and his wife came from Chicago to help develop a Swedenborgian group. Other Swedenborgian families came, and the church grew. It is not certain whether Eliza official joined, but she had her two daughters [one adopted] christened in the church.

The Riverside church flourished, but Eliza had some friction with them. She attended a Universalist church for awhile, but also withdrew from there. It's quite possible that her friction with both churches had to do with her involvement with Spiritualism. The Swedenborgian Church had become increasingly critical of Spiritualism as the movement continued to grow, and ministers were preaching about its dangers. If Eliza could not comfortably be both Swedenborgian and Spiritualist, then it was clear where her heart was. She would be a medium. [Photo at the right is a Sculpture of a young Eliza]

Eliza's health deteriorated as she grew older, and she died in 1898 while visiting the Spiritualist community in Summerland.

What an incredible life she had! She was in Cincinnati as the Swedenborgian community was growing; she was in New York when it was the center of the new Spiritualist movement, and in Virginia at the end of the Civil War when abolitionist efforts were so important. She was in D.C. at the height of the fight for women's suffrage. She arrived in Riverside, CA. in time to introduce a new type of orange that allowed her community and the entire area to thrive from growing navel oranges.

Did her Swedenborgian background impact the way she lived her life? We see in her life many of the same things we saw in Johnny Appleseed and in Helen Keller. All three of these

Swedenborgians were committed to making the world a better place. They stood firm for justice in the social movements of their day. They stood outside the mainstream of their society in important ways; putting an emphasis on the usefulness of their lives over monetary success or personal fame.



I am grateful to have learned about Eliza and her Swedenborgian and Spiritualist commitments, and her work for freedom of slaves, suffrage, and many other issues. She made many lasting impressions on society. The one for which we know her best is her bringing navel orange trees to Riverside. Just as Johnny found God in the simple apple seed, Eliza saw the Divine in the cuttings of navel orange trees. *{The photo at the left is an orange grove in Riverside today.}*

So, as Swedenborgians continue to tell the story of Johnny Appleseed and apple trees, we also must tell about Eliza Lovell Tibbets and the navel orange trees. Their Swedenborgian faith was an inspiration to both of them in all that they did.

Eliza's life is an inspiration in how to live a life of "uses" in all of one's endeavors in life. In what ways do you find yourself inspired by this amazing woman? How do you see her Swedenborgian faith being lived in her life?

Let us pray.

Prayer and Inspiration for 10/16/11:

When the world presents too many things to do, Pause, and ask the Lord for inspiration as to the next best thing to accomplish. It really helps to stay in the moment. Take a 10 minute prayer and quiet pause, when your day is getting too caught up in the future or the past. When we have one foot in the past and one foot in the future, we do not live today. We just miss the most incredible potential of today.....which is the opportunity to co-create the now with God. Think about it!!

Prayer:

Lord in these days of potential chaos, keep me in today communing with you. Let me not waste one minute in time focused on what wasn't or what could be. Help me to know your presence in this moment and Glory in the Gift of God. Thank you God for every intimate moment with you, creating your world on earth and guided by your influx of Grace, Peace, Love and Wisdom. Thank you for the Blessings of NOW. AMEN.

Love,
Rev. Judith



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

The Lord's Universal Mercy

October 23, 2011

READINGS

FROM SCRIPTURE

Jonah 3:6 - 4:11

When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

"By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah 4: 1-10

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"



Johah, Philip Ratner, 1998, Ratner Museum

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

Matt. 20:1-16



The Laborers, Jesus Mafa, Africa

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius^a for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

"About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

"He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'

"'Because no one has hired us,' they answered.

"He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'

"The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

"But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave

you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Psalm 145:1-16

I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.^[b]
They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

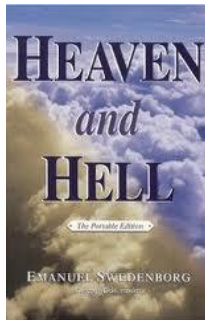
The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.

The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.
They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.^[c]
The LORD upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.
You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

FROM SWEDENBORG





What pertains to doctrine does not distinguish the churches before the Lord; but it is a life according to the doctrines that does this; all of which, provided they are true, look to charity as their fundamental. What is a doctrine, but that which is to teach how a man must live? In the Christian world the doctrines are what distinguish the churches; and from them people call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, or the Reformed and the Evangelical, and by other names also. It is from what is doctrinal alone that they are so called; which would not be at all, if they would love to the Lord and good will toward the neighbor the principal things of faith. The doctrines would then be only varieties of opinion respecting the mysteries of faith, which truly Christian people would leave to everyone according to his or her conscience, and would say in his or her heart that one is truly a Christian when he or she lives as a Christian, or as the Lord teaches. Thus from differing churches there would become one Church; and all the dissensions which exist from doctrine alone would vanish; yea, the hatreds against one another would be dissipated in a moment, and the Lord's kingdom would come upon the earth (AC 1799).

It is a common opinion that those born out of the Church, who are called heathen or gentiles, cannot be saved, because they have not the Word and thus do not know the Lord, and without the Lord there is no salvation. But still it may be known that they also are saved, from this alone, that the mercy of the Lord is universal, that is, toward everyone . . . for the Lord is love itself, and His love is to will to save all. Therefore He has provided that all may have religion, and by it acknowledgement of the Divine, and interior life (HH 318).

MESSAGE

The Lord's Universal Mercy

by Rev. David Fekete



Rev. David Fekete



Our Bible selections this morning treat an important religious principle. They treat God's relationship with the whole human race on the one hand, and on the other hand they treat our own personal feelings about each other. We find a reflection on God's will and on our will. The readings point to a possible disjunction between the way God governs the world and the way we would like to see it governed.

In the story of Jonah we see that God's love goes out to the whole human race. In this story we see that God hears prayers of everyone who call upon Him. This theme is first introduced when Jonah is in a boat. God has told Jonah to preach the Word of God to the city of Nineveh. But Jonah rebels against God's call, flees and buys passage on a boat bound for another city called Tarshish. While he is on the boat a terrible storm breaks out and the sailors cry out to their several gods. The storm grows worse and they ask Jonah about his God. Here we find the first statement of God's universal power and mercy. Instead of calling Yahweh the God of Israel, Jonah calls Him, "the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land." So here we see that God governs the whole world, not only the people of Israel. Jonah admits that he is fleeing from God, and even tells the sailors to throw him into the sea. Hesitant to do this, the sailors pray to Yahweh and ask forgiveness for throwing Jonah into the sea. When they do so, the sea instantly becomes calm. God has listened to the prayers of the sailors, who weren't Jews. Awed by this, the sailors offer sacrifices and make vows to Yahweh. God's power and mercy is recognized by these non-Jews. As we all know, Jonah is swallowed by a great fish that carries him to the shores of Nineveh after all. Jonah preaches to the Ninevites, telling them that God will destroy their city in forty days. The Ninevites believe Jonah and they all repent, fast, and put on sack cloth. When God sees their humility and repentance, He has compassion on them and doesn't destroy the city. This is the second instance in the story where we see that God's mercy extends to the whole world, even to the inhabitants of Nineveh. Jonah admits that God loves everyone. He says to God, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."



Nineveh was chosen in this story for several good reasons. First of all, the Ninevites were considered idolatrous. They worshipped foreign gods and made statues and idols to their gods. Israelites would consider this breaking the first and second commandments. Second, and probably more important, Nineveh was the capitol of the Assyrian kingdom. And it was the Assyrian kingdom that had conquered and devastated the northern Kingdom of Israel. An Israelite would no doubt cherish hatred for this kingdom.

We see this hatred in Jonah. After he preaches the Word of God's impending destruction, he sits under a shelter and waits to see if God will destroy this hated city. He already has told God his anger at

being called to save the Ninevites. He is so angry that he wants to die. But the conclusion of the story tells us, in a final note, that God cares about the whole human race. God says to Jonah,

Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?

This story teaches us that God loves the whole human race. It teaches us that God can and does save followers of all faiths--Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, and all the different forms of Christians we see in the world. This story calls us to see other people and faiths the way that God sees them--as our fellows, as our sisters and brothers, as fellow angels on the path. Swedenborg has a vision of hope that all of Christendom would come together and worship God as one church. He says that if only worship of God and love for the neighbor are held up as principles of faith, then all the theological differences that separate us would be seen merely as differences of opinion. The doctrines that divide us would be seen as varieties of ways to understand the mysteries of faith, which each Christian would leave to the conscience of each other.

In the Christian world the doctrines are what distinguish the churches; and from them people call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, or the Reformed and the Evangelical, and by other names also. It is from what is doctrinal alone that they are so called; which would not be at all, if they would make love to the Lord and good will toward the neighbor the principal things of faith. The doctrines would then be only varieties of opinion respecting the mysteries of faith, which truly Christian people would leave to everyone according to his or her conscience, and would say in his or her heart that one is truly a Christian when he or she lives as a Christian, or as the Lord teaches. Thus from differing churches there would become one Church; and all the dissensions which exist from doctrine alone would vanish; yea, the hatreds against one another would be dissipated in a moment, and the Lord's kingdom would come upon the earth (AC 1799).

When Swedenborg speaks of the hatreds among fellow Christians, this is no mere theological speculation. The thirty-years' war that erupted just before Swedenborg's birth was largely caused by Protestant rebellion against the Holy Roman Empire. It was a devastating war that ultimately engulfed all of Europe. It left Germany decimated and reduced its inhabitants by half. The country of Sweden played a large role in this war. The thirty-years' war and other national hostilities based on religion, inspired the philosopher Immanuel Kant to create a system of morality that is based on reason alone--not religious affiliation. Even if war is not the result of intolerance, still Christians are often divided by their faiths. Some even think that other Christians are damned to hell for not thinking as they do. Swedenborg himself writes many damning passages against other Christian sects of his time. While he does want to put forth his doctrines, I don't

Emanuel Swedenborg

think it serves us to judge other faiths according to their beliefs. We can't see into the hearts of other Christians and know whether they are good or evil. In my experiences with the National Council of Churches and with the Interfaith Centre, I meet such friendly people and people who show such good will. Their actions and spirit speak for themselves. And I am happy to be living here in such a diverse and cosmopolitan city as Edmonton is, in which so many cultures and faiths are represented.

Swedenborg shows a tension in this. In the passage I just quoted, we see Swedenborg accepting other faiths as mere differences of opinion. Then there are those passages in which he denounces what he calls falsities of other faiths. The tension is there. I think our best course is to assume sincerity in other faiths, and to see doctrinal differences just as Swedenborg sees them in the passage above--as "varieties of opinion respecting the mysteries of faith." This does not mean that we are to give up our own

voice and belief system. Not at all. Our opinions respecting the mysteries of faith need to be honored as much as we honor others. The image Swedenborg gives of religious plurality is not a melting-pot. Rather he sees it as complimentary jewels on a king's crown. He sees,

the church in the whole aggregate, which in itself is one, but various according to reception. These varieties may be compared to the various jewels in a king's crown; and they may also be compared to the various members and organs in a perfect body, which still make one. The perfection of every form exists from various things suitably arranged in their order (AR 65).



Perfection is in variety that works together, not in uniformity.

The same is true of faiths outside the Christian world. Some Christians think that only those who accept Jesus as their saviour can be saved. I have met these Christians--here in Edmonton and in Florida. They refer to John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." This doctrine is stated even more forcefully in John 3:36, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." I was going to do an internship with a Lutheran Minister in Florida. He did an internet search about our church and studied it diligently. When we met, he had many passages highlighted in yellow. One was our teaching that everyone can be saved who practices their religion as best as they know how. He pointed to that line and said, "I can't accept this." For him, it was Christ's passion on the cross that saves us, and without faith in Christ's sacrifice, one couldn't be saved. This is the view held by many Christians. Swedenborg himself is aware of this. He writes,

It is a common opinion that those born out of the Church, who are called heathen or gentiles, cannot be saved, because they have not the Word and thus do not know the Lord, and without the Lord there is no salvation.

Reason alone tells us that God could not, that God would not damn all the billions of other faithful people who worship other religions. What kind of God would do that? We have seen in our Bible reading, too, that God's love goes out to the whole world. It went out to the sailors on the boat, and it went out to the idolatrous nation of Nineveh. Swedenborg teaches the same God, whose love is universal for the whole human race. In *Heaven and Hell* Swedenborg writes about those born outside of the Christian faith.

But still it may be known that they also are saved, from this alone, that the mercy of the Lord is universal, that is, toward everyone . . . for the Lord is love itself, and His love is to will to save all. Therefore He has provided that all may have religion, and by it acknowledgement of the Divine, and interior life (HH 318).

So we say in our faith every Sunday, "God is present to save everyone, everywhere, whose lives affirm the best they know."



Charles Bonney, 1893

Swedenborg's vision of churches all uniting together in love of God and appearing as beautiful jewels on a king's crown is in reach. Movements like the National Council of Churches of Christ, movements like the Edmonton Interfaith Centre, and celebrations like the Parliament of World's Religions are all testimonials to a greater unity in worship of the One God. Our church has a proud history in this. It was a Swedenborgian, Charles Bonney, who was president of the World's Congress Auxiliary in 1893, of which the Parliament of World's Religions was one convocation. It was no doubt his Swedenborgian faith that taught him God's love for all peoples of good will and devotion to God. As always, Swedenborg's theology is founded on the Bible. And the story of Jonah teaches us that God loves the faithful of the whole world. Will we be like Jonah and protest against God's compassion for those we personally don't approve of? Or will we embrace our fellows--Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians of other faiths. I think the answer for us is clear.



Vivekenanda, Parliament of World Religions, 1893

PRAYER

"BEHOLD! I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!

Today it hit me, everyday God makes all things new for us if we open ourselves to His Influx. How simple. I have the choice today to discard my old way of thinking and being, and open to Gods Divine Plan for me and my life.

I can ask to be changed at depth. What a concept. Everyday can be shining with Gods Bounty and Love. Everyday can be filled with joy, gratitude and expectancy for new growth.

" Lord help me to be that instrument you will use to serve your people better, with more compassion, understanding, wisdom and love. Help me to be less focused on what I already know, and listen to that which you want me to know. Keep me ever mindful of your prompts to me for action, so that I may be a better servant and disciple. Thank you Lord for the bounty that is in my life today and everyday. Let me plant seeds of encouragement to your Children, so they may grow as you would have them. Let your light shine on all of us and let your angels be closer to us than ever before....and it is so.....AMEN.



Music and Healing

October 30, 2011

READINGS

FROM THE BIBLE

Psalm 19^[a]

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

³ They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

⁴ Yet their voice^[b] goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.
⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.



Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Footnotes:

- a. Psalm 19:1 In Hebrew texts 19:1-14 is numbered 19:2-15.
- b. Psalm 19:4 Septuagint, Jerome and Syriac; Hebrew *measuring line*

FROM SWEDENBORG

Apocalypse Revealed (Whitehead) n. 276

276. Having everyone of them harps, signifies confession of the Lord's Divine Human from spiritual truths. It is known that confessions of Jehovah were made in the temple at Jerusalem by singing, and at the same time by instruments of music which corresponded; the instruments were principally trumpets and timbrels, and psalteries and harps; the trumpets and timbrels corresponded to celestial goods and truths, and the psalteries and harps to spiritual goods and truths; the correspondences were with their sounds. What celestial good and truth is, and what spiritual good and truth, may be seen in the work concerning Heaven and Hell (n. 13-19, and 20-28). That "harps" signify confessions of the Lord from spiritual truths, may appear from these passages:

Confess to Jehovah with the harp, sing unto Him with the psaltery of ten strings (Ps. 33:2).

I will confess to Thee on the harp, O God, my God (Ps. 43:4).

I will confess to Thee on the instrument of the psaltery, I will sing unto Thee with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel (Ps. 71:22).

Arouse me psaltery and harp, I will confess Thee among the nations, O Lord (Ps. 57:8, 9; 108:2-4).

Answer to Jehovah by confession, play on the harp to our God (Ps. 147:7).

MESSAGE

*Music and Healing:
The Ministry of Rev. Ken Turley*

We've explored many ways of healing these past months, but we haven't yet looked specifically at music as a form of healing. It has certainly always been a part of worship.

When the Israelites successfully crossed the Red Sea, Miriam and the women celebrated with timbrels and dancing.

*19 When Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen[e] went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. 20 Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. 21 Miriam sang to them:
"Sing to the LORD,*

*for he is highly exalted.
Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea.”*

[from Exodus 15]

Swedenborg talked of the life in heaven as filled with music, concerts, and singing. He said that music originated in the heavens before coming to the natural world. In a 1914 New Church Life article, "Was Swedenborg a Music Lover?" the author concludes that he was, and cites a story by a contemporary of Swedenborg enjoying music.



Our denominational President, Rev. Ken Turley, has an active music ministry. He composes music and performs it in churches and many other locations. I asked Rev. Ken how music has impacted him, both for personal healing and for the healing his music has brought to so many.

A Portrait of Rev. Ken Turley commissioned by the Fryeburg New Church when he retired from parish ministry.

He told me that when he was in the first and second grade, his music teacher taught his class folk songs. Rev. Ken writes:

I remember "Eating Goober Peas", an old Civil War Song, which I still sing to myself when I am or want to feel silly and happy, but my favorites were the spirituals like "Wade In The Water", "Climbing Jacob's Ladder" and "Go Down Moses". Those melodies are even today the reason I have a love for the Blues and the Spirituals that make up the foundation of modern Gospel music.

Ken was raised by his parents, Rev. Cal and Marilyn Turley. Ken has fond memories of his father's love of music.

He [Cal Turley] loved music and purchased and played many records around the house. His tastes were very eclectic ranging from Big Band Swing to the Folk Music of the early 60's. I listened to the Limelighters, Peter, Paul and Mary, Judy Collins, Pete Seeger, Harry Belafonte and Odetta. What was most notable was that my dad, using his reel to reel tape recorder and a foot pedal that he used to start and stop songs while remaining seated (cutting edge technology of the day!?!), played many of the songs with spiritual messages in church services on Sunday mornings. I was at an age where I was required to attend church and while I didn't much like the service, I loved the music and remember the experience of hearing Odetta in church even today.

As a young adult, Ken Turley continued to explore the world of music:

During the late 60's and early 70's I was doing Alternative Service to the draft as a Conscientious Objector to the Vietnam War and living in San Francisco. I was an early member of a group called Mother Goose, Inc. which took the arts to kids confined in institutions. We performed as a band and then worked with kids on our individual instruments. Within a relatively short time we were able to bring the

kids together and they were able to perform as a band for their peers in the institution. Until that time music was a very personal experience, it was during these years that I truly understood music's power to change one's inner experience and outer life's circumstances as well.

At this point, **music became a healing presence in Ken Turley's life.**

Later in the 70's while I was back in college earning a degree in music I was fortunate enough to be involved in two different productions of Godspell. One was a production put on by the University of Puget Sound where I was enrolled which eventually took second place in a regional competition of university dramatic productions. The other was a semi-professional production that travelled around the Seattle area doing three shows over a weekend at local churches. I played guitar in both productions and was music director of the second. After a hundred or so performances, it dawned on me that popular music, i.e. rock'n'roll, could actually convey a spiritual message that young people would actually listen to and enjoy! Some of us are slow learners.

This was a dramatic perspective in the 1970's; that **popular music can bring spiritual messages to young people [and many older ones as well!]**

It was shortly after graduation while searching for a way to earn a living as a musician that I committed myself to be a church musician and devote my musical talents to serving God.

This was another pivotal moment in Turley's life as he recognized a call to service God with a ministry of music

Unfortunately at that time, no one would even consider my application because I did not play the organ, even though musicals like Godspell and Jesus Christ Superstar were so successful and the popularity of the Folk Mass was growing rapidly. Moved by this and the need for theological studies, I enrolled at the Swedenborgian seminary and that has resulted in my serving as a minister in which music has been such an important part.

It's hard to imagine Ken Turley not being considered for music ministry because he didn't play an organ! His guitar and other instruments have brought energy to numerous churches and denominational events, like our annual convention.



Throughout my life music has been an essential means for keeping me focused and spiritually healthy and growing. It has been a cathartic expression of my sorrows and loneliness and my joys and happiness as well. It has been an expression of my love and gratitude for God's guidance and blessings in my life and an essential tool in leading others in worship and a wide variety of spiritually focused activities and events. To this day, whether I am playing in a church or in a bar I see music as a means for

lifting the spirits and influencing people's attention and inner state to the good things of life, which of course, whether stated and/or acknowledged or not, come directly from God. While I take great joy from my musical creations and the act of playing, at the end of my life here on earth, what I hope for is that the music that has come through me will have helped others in their spiritual journey and ultimately brought them closer to God, as it certainly has for me.

For your own experience of Rev. Ken's music as leading to spiritual healing and wholeness, listen to "Pergamum" at the end of this page. It was written in honor of the angel.

Now, re-read Psalm 19 at the top of the page, and then listen to the music Rev. Ken wrote based on this Psalm [also at the end of the page].

Let us pray.

DOWN HERE LORD WAITING ON YOU.....WAITING ON YOU TO CALL.....CAN'T DO NOTHING, CAN'T DO NOTHING UNTIL YOU CALL!!!!"

These are the lyrics to a wonderful Gospel Song. Have you ever experienced or are you experiencing waiting and waiting for God to give you the prompt to move ahead with a project, a move, a relationship or a job? It is so easy to be "ready" to move ahead with our plans, ideas, etc. only to have a void of energy to get it moving. Well, like the gospel song says Can't do nothing until you call!!!! I have been experiencing that recently in my life...you know about this.... nothing works right and there are obstacles in the way. Even our plans must be coincided with our Lord's Plan for us otherwise they do not flow or work right. So if that is happening to you....Let Go and Surrender to God's Plan for you. Watch how easily things flow when we get out of the way.

Dear Lord, our beloved friend and comforter, we are so grateful for your wondrous Grace and Love for us. It is with humble hearts that we ask for your green light in our lives. Help us to know when to begin and when to retreat. When the season is right for change or completion in our lives. These times have been difficult for us and our brothers and sisters globally. Show us how to walk in peace and harmony with each other, giving support to all. in Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.

Rev. Judith



Joyful Noise

November 6, 2011

Psalm 100

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

1 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

3 Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;*
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

5 For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

SWEDENBORG

A psalm for confession: Make a joyful noise to Jehovah, all the earth; He hath made us, and not we ourselves, His people and the flock of His pasture. Enter through His gates with confession, into His courts with praise; confess ye to Him, and bless His name. For Jehovah is good, His mercy is forever, and His truth to generation and generation (Ps. 100:1-5).

Here it is evident what "confessing" and "confession" signify, namely, acknowledging Jehovah or the Lord, and the things which are His. That this acknowledgment is doctrine and the Word is manifest.

Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 3880 #2

Joyful Noise: Music and Worship

Last week we began to explore the music ministry of Rev. Ken Turley, and will continue that conversation next week. This week, we are going to expand our worship experience of music. During our chats this week, participants have shared some of their favorite worship music. Much of today's music was suggested from within our worship community. Below, passages from Scripture and quotations from Swedenborg are intertwined with a variety of worship music. A large number of selections are provided for you to select the ones that appeal to you the most. To learn more about any video, double click on the window and it will take you back to the U-Tube page where it originated.

Psalm 98

King James Version (KJV)

Psalm 98



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

1 *0 sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.*

2 *The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.*

3 *He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*

4 *Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.*

MEDELSSOHN

Apocalypse Explained (Tansley) n. 1185

for musical sounds express affections, and call them forth attended with joy. Stringed instruments signify spiritual, and wind instruments celestial things; that they correspond to affections, may be seen above (n. 323, 326.) But what the voice of the harp, of the pipe, and of the trumpet signify specifically, cannot be seen except from the affections; and these are of two kinds, spiritual and celestial, the spiritual being from truths, and the celestial from goods. They are, moreover, of three degrees - inmost, middle, and outmost - the inmost being such as are in the inmost heaven, the middle such as are in the middle heaven, and the outmost such as are in the ultimate heaven.

GREGORIAN CHANT Kyrie Christe Eleison

PSALM 98

6 *With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.*

7 *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*

8 *Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together*

9 *Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*

TAIZE CHANT

1 Samuel 18:5-7

King James Version (KJV)

5 *And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.*

6 *And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.*

7 *And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.*

I WILL RISE Chris Tomlin

True Christian Religion (Rose) n. 745

There are festival days here, which are scheduled by the prince in order to relieve our minds of the stress and fatigue that tends to affect us if we become overly competitive. On festival days there is music and singing in the streets, and there are sporting events and shows outside the city. In the public squares stages are set up, framed by screens of latticework that have grapevines interwoven in them and bunches of grapes hanging down. Between these the musicians sit on three tiers. They have all kinds of stringed instruments and wind instruments that cover the spectrum from treble to bass, with timbres ranging from soft to sharp. On either side of the musicians there are male and female vocalists, who entertain the audience with excellent songs and praises, in solos and as a choir. Now and then

during the performance they will shift to a different type of music. On festival days, entertainments like this will start early and go all morning; then after a break for lunch they will continue through the afternoon into the evening. [description of angels in heaven]

HOW GREAT THOU ART JOHNNY CASH

Divine Providence (Dole) n. 202, #1

It is this infinite and eternal creation that the Lord provided for in creating the universe, and he is constantly present in that creation through his divine providence.

BAMBOO FLUTE AND NATURE SOUNDS

Arcana Coelestia (Elliott) n. 745

745. In general 'bird' means thoughts. This is clear from what has been stated in several places already about birds meaning intellectual concepts or rational concepts. In those places however they are called 'birds of the air' whereas here it is simply 'bird', which is why thoughts in general are meant. Indeed there are many kinds of birds, clean and unclean, which in verse 14 below are differentiated as birds, flying creatures, and winged creatures. Clean ones are thoughts about truth, the unclean are false thoughts, which will in the Lord's Divine mercy be dealt with later on.*

** lit. birds of the heavens (or the skies)*

BIRDS IN FLIGHT

LET US PRAY

Inspiration and prayer for 11/6/ 11:

Have you ever looked at your whole life as a pie? A little hospitality, a little self-effort, a little faith, a little trust, a little gratitude, a little joy, a little prayer and a little love. All these things make up your life and so much more. The only place where you can see every part of your life and live it well is right in the center of the pie where God dwells right in your heart. From there you and God can direct your path to the very best that life that can be. How is your pie shaping up today? Is it baking well? Hummm?

Holy God, we live in a world full of fearful people, internal strife, and negativityall of it sometimes overpowering. Keep us guided in to the quiet of our prayer closet daily through out the day, so that all efforts to live a good Christian Life are manifested now to your glory. Show us your pillow soft love in every action. AMEN

Love and Many Blessings,

Rev. Judith

Music & Worship

November 13, 2011

READINGS

Bible

Ecclesiastes 3

King James Version (KJV)

¹To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

²A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

³A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

⁷A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

⁹What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

¹⁰I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

¹¹He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

¹²I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

¹³And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

¹⁴I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.



¹⁵That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

Swedenborg

2] Pleasures are of two kinds, those of the will, and those of the understanding. In general there are the pleasures of possession of land and wealth, the pleasures of honor and office in the state, the pleasures of conjugal love and of love for infants and children, the pleasures of friendship and of converse with companions, the pleasures of reading, of writing, of knowing, of being wise; and many others. There are also the pleasures of the senses: as the pleasure of hearing, which is in general that from the sweetness of music and song; and that of seeing, which is in general that of various and manifold beauties; and of smelling, which is from the sweetness of odors; and of tasting, which is from the agreeableness and wholesomeness of foods and drinks; and of touch, from many pleasing sensations. These kinds of pleasures, being felt in the body, are called pleasures of the body. But no pleasure ever exists in the body unless it exists and subsists from an interior affection, and no interior affection exists except from one more interior, in which is the use and the end. AC 994

MESSAGE

Music & Worship

The Music Ministry of Rev. Ken Turley, Pt. 2



Ken Turley was raised by Rev. Cal and Marilyn Turley. He came to love music at an early age, and often heard it in church services. He got a bachelors degree in music, and then decided that he wanted to go into ministry; a music ministry. He applied to seminaries. He writes:

Unfortunately at that time, no one would even consider my application because I did not play the organ, even though musicals like Godspell and Jesus Christ Superstar were so successful and the popularity of the Folk Mass was growing rapidly. Moved by this and the need for theological studies, I enrolled at the Swedenborgian seminary and that has resulted in my serving as a minister in which music has been such an important part.

Rev. Ken has spent many years in parish ministries of our church, and is now President of the Denomination. Through all of these years, he has had a special interest in using music as part of worship.

I asked Rev. Ken how he sees music connected to worship and to our spirituality. Here are some of the points he made:

Music as Spiritual Practice

In church, we sing hymns, and it usually enhances our worship. However, most of us have not explored the range of music that can be a form of worship; in church and outside of it. There are many other ways and other settings in which music can bring us closer to God.

One powerful spiritual experience can come from playing a musical instrument. The discipline to learn an instrument is can be a spiritual discipline. One must practice "religiously" to be able to share spirituality through a musical instrument. Just as one might pray or meditate or read the Bible on a regular basis to enhance spirituality, one can practice a musical instrument for the same experience.

Below is a link to slide show to accompany music performed by Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley.

[Click here for a musical slide show.](#)

Music as Connection with the Divine

Music can be an experience of wholeness and connection: with each other and with God. When we share music, we may be singing [sharing sacred breath together], listening [using our ears and hearing to connect with our emotions], and moving our whole body with the music. Our body itself becomes an instrument to connect with the Divine.

Music as Experience of the Intuitive

We can experience God and share Divine Love in many ways through the use of music. Consider all of these forms of "uses" through music:

Listening to music
writing music
playing music
incorporating music into other arts
singing
dancing

When you write music, play an instrument, sing or dance for others -- you are helping others experience the Divine.

When you sing or dance with others, you are sharing the Divine together. Playing instruments, singing, and dancing together all involve ways of finding a common wholeness in God.

This slide show is from the album *Song of Spring: the Story of Johnny Appleseed* by Ken and Laurie Turley.

Click here for another musical slide show; [Song of Spring.](#)

We can worship God in many ways through music. Sometimes we perform in public for others. Sometimes we sing, play, or dance together in church. Sometimes we are just alone with God, and we can pray to God through our breath, our ears, our voice, and our body movements. What's important is that it be a spiritual experience.

Do you do any of the following in your life? If so, in what ways are they a spiritual experience for you?

Play an instrument -- alone or in a group? What is it like to practice? to perform? ... or just to play?

Write music for others to sing/ play? What is that like for you?

Dance -- alone? in groups? in church? in prayer?

Sing -- alone? with others? in church? in prayer?

Rev. Ken says that he does not want to teach us facts about music. He wants to invite us into the experience of all forms of music as part of our spiritual life.

Prayer

Today I have been focused on the 23rd Psalm and how grateful I am for God's care. Every need is taken care of and sometimes our wants are too.

I trust that God is keeping watch over all his children; even those at war, and those wounded by war.

Divine Lord, thank you for this day and for meeting all our needs today. I ask that you bless all of our veterans, their families, and our servicemen and women who are deployed today. All of them are needing Your Care today. Fill them with your Peace, even in the midst of battle. Care for them as it is promised them in the 23rd Psalm. Thank you Lord for your care for all of us this day and all the days to come. Help us to remember in our daily prayers. AMEN

Rev. Judith

Is God Thankful?

November 20, 2011

READINGS

FROM THE BIBLE

³⁰ *I will praise God's name in song
and glorify him with thanksgiving.*

³¹ *This will please the LORD more than an ox,
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.*

³² *The poor will see and be glad—
you who seek God, may your hearts live!*

³³ *The LORD hears the needy
and does not despise his captive people.*

³⁴ *Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and all that move in them,*

Psalm 69

FROM SWEDENBORG

Apocalypse Explained (Whitehead) n. 689

689. Verse 17. *Saying, we give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, signifies the acknowledgment that all being, living, and ability are from the Lord. This is evident from the signification of "saying and giving thanks," as being to acknowledge, since "to fall upon the face and to worship," and then "to give thanks," can have no other signification than to acknowledge, here the omnipotence of the Lord. Also from the signification of "the Lord God," as being the Lord in respect to Divine good and Divine truth; for where Divine good is meant in the Word the names "Lord" and "Jehovah" are used, and where Divine truth is meant the name "God" is used, therefore "the Lord God" and "Jehovah God" mean the Lord in respect to Divine good and Divine truth. Moreover, "Jehovah" in the Old Testament, is called "Lord" in the New. It is also evident from the signification of "Almighty," as being to be, to live, and to have ability of Himself, and also that the being, life, and ability of angels and men are from Him. (That this is meant by omnipotence, may be seen above, n. 43; also that Divine omnipotence means what is infinite, n. 286.)*

MESSAGE

Is God Thankful?

How can we feel thankful in today's world? Countless people around the globe live in squalor and die from hunger. In our economy, thousands have lost jobs and homes. Young people cannot find jobs. Our congress is deadlocked over vital issues; we're hearing accusations of child abuse by trusted football coaches.

Why do we honor the pilgrims at Thanksgiving? They only survived because the Native Americans helped them, yet the Pilgrims and their ancestors "thanked" the Native Americans by attempting to obliterate their tribes and culture as they [we] confiscated their land.

Last year, as I pondered these questions, it seemed difficult to find ways to be thankful to God. I wondered if God perhaps was thankful for us, and the many things we do every day to try and make a difference in the lives of others. I wrote a sermon called, "What is God Thankful for?"

This past year, I have grown in my capacity to understand web site statistics, and was fascinated to realize that that sermon was one of the most popular ones on our website. In this year, 1,574 visited this sermon and service. The next week, for the start of Advent, I wrote "Light One Candle" and discovered that 1,170 people visited that page. Most of our sermons get about 100 visits over a few weeks.

By the way, the all-time favorite sermon on our site is: "Helen Keller's Inspiration," which was visited 2,391 times since it was posted just over a year ago. Recently I wanted to learn more about Helen Keller, so I googled her name. One of the first sites to pop up was this sermon on our own web site! I know people come to read our sermons and informational pages through web searches.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve this amazing web community. I'd like to share with you part of what I wrote last year at Thanksgiving.

What Is God Thankful For?

My concept of prayer changed when I was taking a Shalem Institute spirituality training, and Sister Rose Mary Dougherty asked, "What is God's prayer for you?"

I had thought of prayer in terms of telling God what I needed or wanted. I hadn't thought of asking God what God wanted for me.

I think the same about Thanksgiving. We thank God for many things at Thanksgiving. What if we were to ask God what things God was thankful for? What things are we doing that God appreciates?

God is probably thankful that we honor a time of harvest. Swedenborg tells us that this is about regeneration. *That "seed-time and harvest" signify man who is to be regenerated, and thus the church ...*

God probably appreciates that we give thanks:

By "giving thanks" is signified the acknowledgment and glorification of the Lord;

'Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving' signifies the Lord's spiritual Divine things.

God may not be thankful about what really happened between the pilgrims and Native Americans.

In 1970, Wamsutta, an Aquinnah Wampanoag man, had been asked to speak at a Massachusetts banquet celebrating the 350th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims. He agreed. But when they saw an advance copy of the talk, they refused to allow him to deliver it. He had planned to say:

Even before the Pilgrims landed it was common practice for explorers to capture Indians, take them to Europe and sell them as slaves for 220 shillings apiece. The Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod for four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors and stolen their corn and beans. Mourt's Relation describes a searching party of sixteen men. Mourt goes on to say that this party took as much of the Indians' winter provisions as they were able to carry.

Massasoit, the great Sachem of the Wampanoag, knew these facts, yet he and his People welcomed and befriended the settlers of the Plymouth Plantation.

When told he could not deliver this speech, Wamsutta refused to speak at the banquet. Instead he and many hundreds of other Native people and supporters gathered in Plymouth and observed the first National Day of Mourning. United American Indians of New England have returned to Plymouth every year since to demonstrate against the Pilgrim myths.



The Rev. Robert Two Bulls says:

Perhaps we as a nation need to celebrate the life of Squanto, who was the real hero of this sad story. Instead we celebrate a false mythology that plays into our notion of greatness. It is presented like a bridge that connects a mythic past of one's ancestors having nothing to present-day descendents having a superabundance of everything. The troubling aspect of this symbol is that the foundation on one side of this bridge is unstable, and I am not sure that making a connection from this myth to giving thanks today is a very good one to make. We have to remember that land in America was largely acquired dishonestly by outright theft and by breaking treaties with the first peoples of this land. American History that only considers the false myths as truth will always diminish the past and present lives of Native American Indians.

So perhaps God is not thankful about the myths behind the first U.S. Thanksgiving. But God is probably thankful about our many efforts to provide food for the hungry and about our efforts to acknowledge the Divine in this time of celebration. God is probably thankful that we take time for prayer and that we engage in many "uses" of help for others. God is probably grateful for the times people work together to help others. God probably appreciates our taking the time to be with people we care about, and to give acknowledgement to the Divine.

What do you see around you that God is thankful for? What can you do to add to God's thankfulness?

PRAYER

This week traditionally we focus on our gratitude to God for the bounty in our lives and our release from difficult times and challenges.

Beloved Lord, thank you for the bounty in our lives. We have a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs, and food for our bellies. We have the grace of your guidance, the wisdom of your word, and your undying love. We are the recipients of your forgiveness and you meet our needs daily. We ask for your blessings on everyone in our lives and on everything. May we serve you with our full hearts and show our gratitude for all your gifts daily. AMEN.

With love and gratitude to all of you.

[Rev. Judith](#)



Swedenborgian
Community Online
Love, Spirit, Life

A Candle for the Dawn

November 27, 2011

READINGS

FROM THE BIBLE

Luke 11

The Lamp of the Body

33 "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. 34 Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy,[g] your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy,[h] your body also is full of darkness. 35 See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. 36 Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines its light on you."

FROM SWEDENBORG

As in the proper sense the "morning" signifies the Lord, His advent, and thus the approach of His kingdom, it is evident what it signifies besides, namely, the rise of a new church (for this is the Lord's kingdom on earth), and this both in general and in particular, and even in the least particular; in general, when any church on the globe is being raised up anew; in particular, when a man is being regenerated, and being made new (for then the Lord's kingdom is arising in him, and he is becoming a church); and in the least particular, whenever the good of love and faith is working in him; for in this consists the advent of the Lord. Hence the Lord's resurrection on the third day in the morning (Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1) involves all these things (even in the particular and the least particular) in regard to His rising again in the minds of the regenerate every day, and even every moment. AC 2405

The God of Hope

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. The word *Advent* means "coming" or "arrival" of something we have been waiting for. Most Western Christian Churches celebrate Advent as the beginning of the Church liturgical year. It is the season of waiting for the birth of Jesus – or as Swedenborg would emphasize – the coming of light into a dark world.

Many churches have an Advent wreath, and light one candle each of the four Sundays of Advent. The first candle is lit today, and is considered by most to be the candle of hope.

A single candle burning is a powerful statement of hope.

Hanukkah is about an amazing story of hope. The Jews had to defend their Temple from the Greeks and finally won the battle.

They needed to re-dedicate it, and they wanted to light the Menorah. There was only enough oil for one night. But, miraculously, the candle kept burning for eight nights! The song, "Light One Candle" commemorates that occasion.

This year, Hanukkah began on the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving. The overlap of these

two holidays last happened in 1888 and won't happen again – according to some sources -- for about 78,000 years!

For Swedenborg, Advent had a lot to do with light. Swedenborg points out that "Advent" is a morning of the Lord.

As in the proper sense the "morning" signifies the Lord, His advent, and thus the approach of His kingdom, it is evident what it signifies besides, namely, the rise of a new church (for this is the Lord's kingdom on earth), and this both in general and in particular, and even in the least particular; in general, when any church on the globe is being raised up anew; in particular, when a man is being regenerated, and being made new (for then the Lord's kingdom is arising in him, and he is becoming a church); and in the least particular, whenever the good of love and faith is working in him; for in this consists the advent of the Lord. Hence the Lord's resurrection on the third day in the morning (Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1) involves all these things (even in the particular and the least particular) in regard to His rising again in the minds of the regenerate every day, and even every moment.

[2] This time or state is called in the Word the "dawn," because the Lord then comes; or what is the same, His kingdom then approaches. The case is similar with the good, for at such a time there shines out with them a semblance of the morning twilight or dawn; and therefore in the Word the advent of the Lord is compared to the "morning," and is also called the "morning." AC 2405

These four weeks of Advent are a new dawn for each of us.

For Swedenborgians, there is an emphasis on the light that is coming into the world and into our hearts. In Advent we celebrate the knowledge that light and love are always stronger than dark and hate. Peace is always stronger than violence. Compassion is stronger than love of the ego. The Light of Christ is birthed in all of our hearts. By connecting with this inner event, we help create heaven on earth.

Swedenborg wrote:

The Lord [Divine Light] is perpetually present with every person, wicked as well as good, for no one could live without His [This] presence. ... It is the Lord's [this] perpetual presence which gives a person the faculty of reason and the ability to become spiritual. This is brought about by the light which comes from the Lord as the sun of the spiritual world, which a person can receive in his understanding. That light is the truth which gives him the power of reasoning.

Swedenborg says that before the Lord came into the world, evil had become increasingly stronger. There were more times of "darkness," when evil was gaining in power. God decided to come into the world in order to bring light into the darkness. The birth of the Christ child WAS the light coming into the world.

All of this helps us to understand an important aspect of Divine Providence: Hope.

When we look at all that is happening in the world today, it is easy to feel despair. Gun violence is rapidly increasing in the U.S. There are wars and threats of war around the world. Children die of hunger and lack of medical care around the world, as well as in our great nation.

For Swedenborg, “light” and “hope” are closely intertwined. When evil become overwhelming in the world, the Lord was born to bring us new light.

We are each one of us, another light in the world, and bringing hope to darkness. There is hope in the light is inside of you, and in all of the people around you. There is no darkness so deep, that the light of Divine Providence cannot bring hope!



Christmas Joy

December 11, 2011

READING

From the Bible:

4Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

10I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. 11Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. 12I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and

12I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. 13I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:4-13

From Swedenborg:

37. (4) The more closely one is conjoined to the Lord the happier one becomes. The like can be said of degrees of happiness as was said (n. 32 and 34) of degrees of life and of wisdom according to conjunction with the Lord. Happiness, that is, blessedness and joy, also are heightened as the higher degrees of the mind, called spiritual and celestial, are opened with man. After his life in the world these degrees grow to eternity. Divine Providence #37

CHRISTMAS JOY

Philip Van Doren Stern [1930-84] was a respected researcher and historical author. He had a dream one night, in the late 1930's. The next morning he wrote it down, and realized he had written a short story. He titled it "The Greatest Gift." He tried to have it published, but no one was interested. He had 200 copies printed, and then in 1943 sent them as Christmas cards to his friends.

During the next couple of years, a couple of magazines ran his story in their Christmas issue. Then, it came to the attention of movie producer Frank Capra. He purchased the rights for \$10,000 and had it re-written as a screenplay. It was released in 1946 as "It's A Wonderful Life," with James Stewart, Donna Reed, and Lionel Barrymore. It was nominated for five academy awards, but won none. It was a flop at the box office. Capra considered it his favorite film, and Jimmy Stewart felt it was the personal favorite of his films.

It was shown on public TV channels at Christmas time for many years. In 1974, the copyright expired, and it became shown on commercial TV stations. A colorized version was done, which Jimmy

Stewart fought against avidly.

This is a movie with deep spiritual themes that have been explored through the years. However, the messages are clearer in the original short story, "The Greatest Gift." It contains some important lessons for us in the 3rd week of Advent.

If you would like to read this little story for yourself, it is at [this link](#). Below is a summary.

THE GREATEST GIFT

excerpts from the story by Philip Van Doren Stern.

The story begins with a depressed George Pratt on a bridge Christmas Eve.

The water looked paralyzingly cold. George wondered how long a man could stay alive in it. The glassy blackness had a strange, hypnotic effect on him. He leaned still farther over the railing...

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," a quiet voice beside him said.

The little man shook his head. "You know you shouldn't think of such things—and on Christmas Eve of all times! You've got to consider Mary—and your mother too."

George opened his mouth to ask how this stranger could know his wife's name, but the fellow anticipated him. "Don't ask me how I know such things. It's my business to know 'em. That's why I came along this way tonight. Lucky I did too." He glanced down at the dark water and shuddered.

"Well, if you know so much about me," George said, "give me just one good reason why I should be alive."

The little man made a queer chuckling sound. "Come, come, it can't be that bad. You've got your job at the bank. And Mary and the kids. You're healthy, young, and—"

"And sick of everything!" George cried. "I'm stuck here in this mudhole for life, doing the same dull work day after day. Other men are leading exciting lives, but I—well, I'm just a small-town bank clerk that even the army didn't want. I never did anything really useful or interesting, and it looks as if I never will. I might just as well be dead. I might better be dead. Sometimes I wish I were. In fact, I wish I'd never been born!"

The little man stood looking at him in the growing darkness. "What was that you said?" he asked softly.

"I said I wish I'd never been born," George repeated firmly. "And I mean it too."

The stranger's pink cheeks glowed with excitement. "Why that's wonderful! You've solved everything. I was afraid you were going to give me some trouble. But now you've got the solution yourself. You wish you'd never been born. All right! OK! You haven't!"

The angel gives George a bag of brushes, so that he can approach people's homes as a bush salesman.

George goes first to the bank building, where he works as a clerk. However, the bank is closed. He chats with a man who said there was a bank clerk named Marty Sterns [the job George had had] embezzled \$50,000 which forced the bank to close. Most of the people in town had been ruined financially. Marty's brother, Arthur, became an alcoholic who married Mary [the woman whom George had married.]

George is quite shaken, and decides to visit the home of his parents.

He looked around the little parlor, trying to find out why it looked different. Over the mantelpiece hung a framed photograph which had been taken on his kid brother Harry's sixteenth birthday. He remembered how they had gone to Potter's studio to be photographed together. There was something queer about the picture. It showed only one figure—Harry's.

"That your son?" he asked.

His mother's face clouded. She nodded but said nothing.

"I think I met him, too," George said hesitantly. "His name's Harry, isn't it?"

His mother turned away, making a strange choking noise in her throat. Her husband put his arm clumsily around her shoulder. His voice, which was always mild and gentle, suddenly became harsh. "You couldn't have met him," he said. "He's been dead a long while. He was drowned the day that picture was taken."

George's mind flew back to the long-ago August afternoon when he and Harry had visited Potter's studio. On their way home they had gone swimming. Harry had been seized with a cramp, he remembered. He had pulled him out of the water and had thought nothing of it. But suppose he hadn't been there!

Then George visits Mary.

Art Jenkins came in. He stood for a moment in the doorway, clinging to the knob for support. His eyes were glazed, and his face was very red. "Who's this?" he demanded thickly.

"He's a brush salesman," Mary tried to explain. "He gave me this brush."

"Brush salesman!" Art sneered. "Well, tell him to get outa here. We don't want no brushes." Art hiccupped violently and lurched across the room to the sofa, where he sat down suddenly. "An' we don't want no brush salesmen neither."

George looked despairingly at Mary. Her eyes were begging him to go. Art had lifted his feet up on the sofa and was sprawling out on it, muttering unkind things about brush salesmen. George went to the door, followed by Art's son, who kept snapping the pistol at him and saying: "You're dead—dead—dead!"

Perhaps the boy was right, George thought when he reached the porch. Maybe he was dead, or maybe this was all a bad dream from which he might eventually awake. He wanted to find the little man on the bridge again and try to persuade him to cancel the whole deal.

George is thrilled to return to his life.

His wife came toward him, dressed for going to church, and making gestures to silence him. "I've just put the children to bed," she protested. "Now they'll—" But not another word could she get out of her mouth, for he smothered it with kisses, and then dragged her up to the children's room, where he violated every tenet of parental behavior by madly embracing his son and his daughter and waking them up thoroughly.

It was not until Mary got him downstairs that he began to be coherent. "I thought I'd lost you. Oh, Mary, I thought I'd lost you!"

"What's the matter, darling?" she asked in bewilderment.

He pulled her down on the sofa and kissed her again. And then, just as he was about to tell her about his queer dream, his fingers came in contact with something lying on the sofa. His voice froze.

He did not even have to pick the thing up, for he knew what it was. And he knew that it would have a blue handle and varicolored bristles.

What lessons are here for the 3rd week of Advent?

Everyday life can be filled with "dispair." George feels that his life is dull, that he is not accomplishing anything. In the movie version, George Bailey is in crisis with his life swirling out of control. In the short story, George Pratt is experiencing the despair of everyday life.

Every life also contains the joy of living. In the movie version, George Bailey is head of a savings and loan that helps many people buy homes. George Pratt in the short story has a less glamorous job; he is a bank clerk. Yet he sees the impact he has had the lives of others. Without his life, there would have been a bank embezzlement that closed the bank and ruined many people. Mary would have married an abusive alcoholic and been very unhappy. His brother would have died in childhood.

Life is the "greatest gift" that George discovers: *"Change me back," George pleaded. "Change me back—please. Not just for my sake but for others too. You don't know what a mess this town is in. You don't understand. I've got to get back. They need me here."*

"I understand right enough," the stranger said slowly. "I just wanted to make sure you did. You had the greatest gift of all conferred upon you—the gift of life, of being a part of this world and taking a part in it. Yet you denied that gift."

In both the short story and the movie, it is our relationships that give life its deepest meaning. Pratt realizes how much everyday joy he gets from his family. Bailey sees not only that, but that he is "the richest man in town" because he has so many friends who are there for him.

Swedenborg tells us that joy comes from our connection with the Divine. The more we open our hearts to the Divine Love and Wisdom flowing into us, the more joy we can experience. The more we share this joy with each other, the deeper we experience it ourselves.

This week, open your heart to the Light of joy.

Let us pray.

Inspiration and prayer for 12-11-11:

This week the following quote came to me and has reminded me of the teachings of the Word and of Swedenborg. What do you think?

" Everything is energy and that's all there is to it. Match the frequency of the reality you want and you cannot help but get that reality. It can be no other way. This is not philosophy. This is physics."

Albert Einstein.

" Beloved Lord, who created all things and dwells within us, thank you for the Joy you bring to us through your Word and Christ Jesus. You open our eyes and our hearts to the Joy of everyday when we surrender to Your Will and remember the birth of Your Son. Keep us focused on You and the Advent Season. Bless everyone with Joy, Peace, and glad hearts. AMEN.

Love, Rev. Mary Judith.



Seeking the Love; Sharing the Light

December 18, 2011

Luke 2 (New International Version, ©2010)

Luke 2

The Birth of Jesus

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while^{al} Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Because from his essence, God burned with the love of uniting himself to man, it was necessary that he should cover himself around with a body. He was to be born, and then to grow in wisdom and in love, and so was to approach to union with his Divine origin. TCR 838

The coming of the Lord is not according to the letter, that he would again appear in the world, but it is his presence in each one, which takes place as often as the gospel is reached, and its holiness is thought about. AD 3900:9

How can you prepare your heart for the birth of Love?

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."**

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 4594

4594. This is Bethlehem. That this signifies in place thereof the resurrection of a new spiritual of the celestial...

[2] The reason why the Lord was born there and not elsewhere, is that He alone was born a spiritual celestial man, but all others natural, with the capacity or ability to become either celestial or spiritual by regeneration from the Lord. The reason why the Lord was born a spiritual celestial man was that He might make His Human Divine, and this according to order from the lowest degree to the highest, and might thus dispose into order all things in the heavens and in the hells.

Let us pray.

This week I have been looking how wonderfully God takes care of His children and how much He loves us. All of our needs are covered; maybe not how we want them to be, but how God wants them to be. We fall so short when loving each other. How tolerant are we when it comes to accepting people and life exactly as it is today? Some days we fall short in our tolerance of our frailties. This Advent let us make a commitment to renew our covenant with God to love our brothers and sisters more and love ourselves and The Lord more.

"Holy One, creator of all, bless us with the ability to love all with our whole hearts. Help us to know where we fall short and change us for the better. Increase our loving ability, so we may love all deeply and fully. Lord open us so we may love you more each day. Thy Will be done. "

AMEN

**With great respect and love,
Rev. Judith**



Welcoming the Light

December 25, 2011

READINGS

From the Bible

Isaiah 9:2-7

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

From Swedenborg

Heaven and Hell (Dole) n. 286

a. In the highest sense, peace means the Lord, because he is the source of peace; and in the inner sense it means heaven, because people there are in a state of peace: 3780, 4681. Peace in the heavens is the divine nature profoundly touching everything good and true there with a blessedness that is beyond our comprehension: 92, 3780, 5662, 8455, 8665.

The coming of the Lord is not according to the letter, that he would again appear in the world, but it is his presence in each one, which takes place as often as the gospel is reached, and its holiness is thought about. AD 3900:9

MESSAGE

The coming of the Lord ... is his presence in each one...

The Light has arrived! We can see it in the earth, as our days become longer. We can see it in each other, as families come together, we give gifts to each other, and we strive to have presents and food for even the poorest amongs us.

Swedenborg says that the Lord's birth takes place in each of us. Where is the light being birthed in you? Are you feeling that you can start loving yourself more? Are you feeling you can reach out to family or friends in a new way? Are you recognizing a desire to bring more of yourself into the world? Are you feeling called to new "uses" in the world; or perhaps to acknowledging the uses you already do?



Do you see ways around you that the Light is being expressed? Here is one of my favorite stories of light being birthed:

World War I started in August of 1914. That first Christmas was very hard for the troops. On that Christmas Eve soldiers from both sides were in trenches with "No Man's Land" in between. The German troops put Christmas trees with candles around their trenches and began singing Christmas carols. Each side started singing Christmas carols in their own language; each applauded the other side.

When dawn broke on Christmas morning, in at least one case, a lone German soldier took his life in his hands and dared to stand up, leave his trench and walk out into "no man's land" toward the British trenches. No one shot him and soon other soldiers on both sides were leaving their trenches and heading into "no man's land" between the two armies. Out there British and German soldiers shook hands, talked together as best they could given the language barrier, showed each other pictures of their wives and children, and shared "eats and drink" with one another. The whole incident was beyond bizarre yet did take place at several places up and down the line of trenches. Later in the day, members of both armies collected the bodies of their fallen comrades and buried them the best they could. Still later, they played football (soccer) in "no man's land". In one case, the Germans scored six goals and won the game.

What an amazing Christmas morning! It took place at several points along the trenches, but only recently have historians started to put all the pieces together.

You can watch the [History Channel documentary](#), or the [movie](#), or read one of the [books](#) about it.

What stories do you see around you that show the birth of the light? How do you recognize the birth of the light in your own heart?

Let us pray.

As we celebrate Christmas let us be inspired by the rebirth of the Lord's Grace in us and the legacy of His Truth and Love.

Lord of all, thank you for your son, Jesus, in our lives. Help us to be good stewards of Your Word and teach us how to love each other as Jesus loves us. Thank you, thank you, for our Joy in you. Amen.

Rev. Judith