

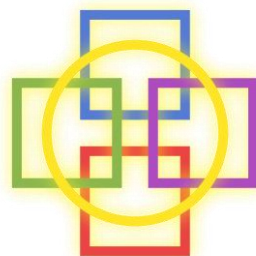


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# SERMON ARCHIVE 2016

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Swedenborgian Community Online



## **Leap of Faith in 2016**

**January 3, 2016**

### **READINGS From the Bible**

#### **Genesis 1: 1-5**

##### ***The Beginning***

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. 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. ...*

## **Message Leap of Faith into 2016**

This Christmas Eve, at the Portland New Church, Nina Sasser sang a beautiful solo of "Merry Christmas/ Happy New Year [war is over]" accompanied by her father Roger Buck. We were all deeply moved by the song.

It was written by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and released in 1971. The song is based on their peace activism during the Viet Nam war. They took out billboards around the country and posted

*"WAR IS OVER! If You Want It – Happy Christmas from John & Yoko*

[Wikipedia](#) says that they "conceived "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" as a means of elaborating upon the themes of social unity and peaceful change enacted through personal accountability and empowerment that served as the basis of the earlier billboard campaign."

For us early in 2016, this song can reflect the mixed feelings many of us have about entering a New Year. We feel the joy of the holiday season, and the "fresh start" as a new year is beginning. Yet, we are also anxious about the state of world with the violence and terrorism around us.



Hope and fear often go "hand in hand," yet it's important that we never let the "fear" take away our "hope."

It is an important time for us to remember the process of regeneration going on in each of us. The start of a new year is a great time to remember the beginning of our own regeneration processes when "*people are being born anew and receiving life.*"

When we have trouble seeing the God's guiding light, let's remember Helen Keller.



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She 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."*

She knew that we can always see God's guiding light within us, even when we can't find it in the world around us.

Our denominational topic this year is "The Year of Spiritual Uses," and for the next few months we're focusing on taking our faith into the world.

This month we're especially looking at what each of us believes, and how we take it into the world.

Here are some basic truths of Swedenborg's. How many of them do you believe?

*Love is stronger than hate.*

*God is constantly at work with us in our renewal – regeneration.*

*We are called to bring our regenerating selves into the world, to share who we are and lend a helping hand to others.*

*Even the smallest action of an ordinary day can have a profound impact on the world.*

*No matter how frightening things around us look, we need to keep turning to the constancy of Divine Love flowing into us every moment.*

*By doing these things, we are changing the world into a more loving place.*



Let us pray: "Dear Lord, please walk with us as we enter the year 2016. Guide our feet to walk a path of Love and guide our hands to do loving works in the world. Even when we feel despair or fear, help us remember that Your Divine Love is flowing into us every moment, and we bring it into the world every day."

## ***Faith vs. Belief***

***January 10, 2016***

### **READINGS From the Bible**

#### **Revelation 21, New International Version (NIV)**

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

#### **From Swedenborg**

#### ***Secrets of Heaven/Arcana Coelestia, §§6628, 6633***

In the preceding exegesis, I have shown that a doctrine of charity was the doctrine in the Early Churches and that this doctrine united all the Churches so as to make one out of the many. They recognized as belonging to the church all who lived in the good of charity and called them their kindred, no matter how they differed as to the truths that we now call “truths of faith.” They taught each other in such matters, and were not upset if one did not accede to the opinion of another, knowing that we all accept truth to the extent that we are engaged in doing what is good . . . . Since in our times the doctrine of charity is among things lost, giving rise to a doctrine of faith that is far removed from the truth, I may offer that doctrine, thanks to the Lord’s divine Mercy, before the individual chapters of the book of Exodus, and so restore it to the church.

#### **Revelation Unveiled §912**

Everything that church has is the good that love does, flowing in together with light out of heaven from the Lord.

## **Message Faith versus Belief in Everyday Life**

Has anyone ever asked you, “What do you believe?” How do you answer that question? Have you been asked: “What do you have faith in?” Is that a different question for you? How do you answer that one?

During this month we’re going to look at how Swedenborg differentiates faith and belief, so that we can each consider how to answer those questions for ourselves and how we strive to live them every day.





This past summer, we took a look at Rev. Dr. Doles understanding [of Swedenborg on belief](#). He wrote:

*Why didn't Swedenborg give us a brief, clear summary of the theology of the New Church? Wrong question. The right question is, "Why haven't we taken advantage of the brief, clear summaries of the theology of the New Church that we have?"*

*Case in point:*

*There are three essentials of the church: the acknowledgment of the Divine [nature] of the Lord, the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word, and the life which is called charity. (Divine Providence 259:3)*

*Notice how nicely the three essentials match the Two Great Commandments.*

*The acknowledgment of the divine nature of the Lord equals the love of the Lord, the life which is called charity equals the love of the neighbor, and the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word equals the reference to the Law the Prophets. What could be simpler?*

So, breaking this down, we have

*Jesus replied:*

*'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'* This is the first and greatest commandment.

[Swedenborg: the acknowledgment of the Divine [nature] of the Lord]

*And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*

[Swedenborg: the life which is called charity.]

*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

[Swedenborg: the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word]

*"The law and the prophets" are the whole Word in all and each of its parts (Arcana Coelestia 1: 6632.)]*

In our final message in this series, [The Gold Standard](#)," we quoted Dole as saying:

*The Holy City is the "Gold Standard." ["and the city was pure gold like pure glass."]*

*What is that "pure gold?" "everything that church has is the good that love does, flowing in together with light out of heaven from the Lord" (Revelation Unveiled §912). Everything.*

*It keeps coming back to “love.” Love now – not in a future heaven.*

From this perspective, Swedenborg did not leave us with “beliefs” or a “theology.” He was asking us to live lives filled with loving actions.

He says this in a different way in Divine Providence 326: a6

Our belief in God and union with him depend on our living a good life. Everyone who knows anything religious can know about God. People can talk about God from this knowledge or from memory, and some of them can even think intelligently about God. If they do not live good lives, though, this brings only a presence. They are still perfectly capable of turning away from him and turning toward hell, which they do if they live evil lives.

He adds after this section:

Heartfelt belief in God, though, is possible only for people who live good lives.

It certainly seems like Swedenborg is saying that what one believes is how one acts. Belief is in our lives; not in our heads. Does that make sense for you, given your life experiences?

Many people have been raised in a church where there is a clearly-defined set of beliefs. Often children will memorize the words to the beliefs of their tradition; even if they don’t grasp the meaning.

It is much harder to explain one’s beliefs from a Swedenborgian perspective.

What about “faith?” Swedenborg uses this term in a slightly different way.

Swedenborg often approaches “faith” in a similar way as “belief.”

### **Secrets of Heaven, 348**

*From what I have said just above it is clear that there are three things that form faith in us: first, turning to the Lord; second, learning truths from the Word; and third, living by those truths.*

Faith is about living. This is a central point for Swedenborg which allowed him to be inclusive of all loving religions. It wasn’t significant what doctrines an individual – or a faith community – have. It is how one lives that is important.

Yet sometimes he refers to a faith in God.

### **Divine Providence, 348**

From what I have said just above it is clear that there are three things that form faith in us: first, turning to the Lord; second, learning truths from the Word; and third, living by those truths.

This gets us back to the idea that the theology of the New Church is about the Great Commandment *‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.*

*And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*

*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

Yet, believing in “the Lord your God” involves some kind of “faith.” It’s a faith in doctrine of a particular religion or denomination. But it seems to be a faith that divinity is in humanity. A faith that we are more than a mass of molecules and cease to exist at our death. It holds to the truth that Love is God ... and therefore cannot be destroyed. Love is stronger than hate.



No matter how much hatred is expressed in the world, it can never overtake Love – for Love is the very basis of our existence – an existence that continues after the death of the physical. This “faith” is not necessarily from religious doctrine – modern physics is coming to the same conclusions through science.

So we need to somehow get to the Love that is the center of our lives –whether from religion, personal experience, or science. And once there, we need to live out of that place every day.

What do you find as the challenges to living from Love day by day?  
What kind of support helps you in staying focused on Love?

Let's pray:

Dear Divine Love,

Help us remain in the heart of Love every day ... where we are one with You... and live out this Love in our actions. Guide us in finding your love, and sharing it through all of our actions. Amen.

## ***Faith in Action***

***January 17, 2016***

### **READINGS From the Bible**

#### **Micah 6**

He has showed you, O man, what is good.  
And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
And to walk humbly with your God.

#### **Matthew 5:43-45** (New Revised Standard Version)

*You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*

### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Divine Providence 210: I**

To will not to do evil to the neighbor is to love him. For he who loves another does not do evil to him. ...This is evident, that he who loves the neighbor does not commit these evils.

## **Message Faith in Action on Martin Luther King Day**



King read Henry David Thoreau's essay "On Civil Disobedience" for the first time when he was fifteen. He wrote about it:

*Here, in this courageous New Englander's refusal to pay his taxes and his choice of jail rather than support a war that would spread slavery's ...I made my first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I reread the work several times.*

He later wrote:

*The teachings of Thoreau came alive in our civil rights movement; indeed, they are more alive than ever before. Whether expressed in a sit-in at lunch counters, a freedom ride into Mississippi, a peaceful protest ..., these are outgrowths of Thoreau's insistence that evil must be resisted and that no moral man can patiently adjust to injustice.*

Swedenborg had had a big impact on Emerson and the other Transcendentalists. Thoreau seems to



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have read Swedenborg, and may have absorbed some of his concept of “evil” and of “neighbor.” Swedenborg said:

*As much as we avoid evils as sins, so much do we love truth, because that is just how much we are we involved in what is good. On the other hand, as much as we do not avoid evils as sins, so much do we not love truth, because that is just how much we are not involved in good things. (The Doctrine of Life #21, 34)*

King's theology was about the Beloved Community, but not as a future event; rather as a way of living life today.

Martin Luther King said this in his “I Have a Dream” speech: “

*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.*

King's concept of the Beloved Community is similar to Swedenborg's New Jerusalem. It is not something for us to dream about for the future; it is something for us to create now in this world.

His approach to making the Beloved Community a part of our everyday lives shows his “faith in action.” He lived a new understanding of racial justice and human dignity.

His life is an example of the faith in the actions of everyday life that Swedenborg wrote about.

Honor Martin Luther King this week by taking one action that expresses your faith.

Let us Pray: Guide us to walk in the footsteps of Martin Luther King, remembering that actions of our lives are the expression of our faith.

## ***Your Life – Your Beliefs!***

***January 24, 2016***

### **READINGS From the Bible**

#### **John 4:46-50**

##### **New International Version (NIV)**

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.

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.

“Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”

The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

“Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”

The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Divine Providence #282**

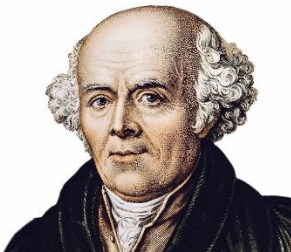
The Lord could heal the understanding in every man and thus cause him to think not evil but good, and this by means of fears of different kinds, miracles, conversations with the dead, or visions and dreams. But to heal the understanding alone is to heal man only outwardly, for understanding with its 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.

## **Message Your Life - Your Beliefs!**

So .... What happens when people's actions reflect their inner beliefs? What happens when they don't?

One way to understand this is to look at the lives of real people.



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What would you do if you were a trained physician, but felt that medical treatments did more harm than good? Samuel Hahnemann faced that dilemma.

Hahnemann was born April 10, 1755, in Germany. [In the year he was born, Swedenborg turned 67.] Hahnemann's father was a painter. Samuel was a brilliant student and learned a number of languages, becoming a translator. He then studied medicine, graduated from medical school in 1779, and became a physician.

In 1781, he began work as a village doctor in Germany. He married and had eleven children. But by 1784, he had given up his practice.

He found that he was quite disgusted by the state of medicine, which included purging, bloodletting, and poisonous chemicals.

He felt that the medicine he had been taught to practice sometimes did the patient more harm than good. He wrote:

*My sense of duty would not easily allow me to treat the unknown pathological state of my suffering brethren with these unknown medicines. The thought of becoming in this way a murderer or malefactor towards the life of my fellow human beings was most terrible to me, so terrible and disturbing that I wholly gave up my practice in the first years of my married life and occupied myself solely with chemistry and writing.*

In order to live by what he saw to be right, he made a brave and radical decision: he quit the practice of medicine. He began to make his living from translating medical texts. He became well-known for his work, and it gave him an opportunity to learn a great deal about medical advances in various languages.

While translating *A Treatise on the Materia Medica*, Hahnemann read that the bark of a Peruvian tree was effective in treating malaria. He was fascinated with this, and made yet another brave and potentially dangerous decision: He began to research this effect by taking the bark himself.

The bark gave him symptoms of malaria, and he decided that would be the case in any healthy person. He concluded:

*"that which can produce a set of symptoms in a healthy individual, can treat a sick individual who is manifesting a similar set of symptoms."*

Or: "like cures like"—the basis of homeopathy.

Hahnemann first used the term homeopathy in an essay in 1807.

Although Hahnemann himself apparently was not influenced by Swedenborg, most of the early homeopaths in the U.S. were Swedenborgians.

Hahnemann himself may have been influenced by Paracelsus of the 1500's. Paracelsus opposed the common medical practices during his day that included of purging, bleeding, sweating, and

vomiting. He 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 a spiritual energy in the world, and 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.

His concept of “similars” had a strong influence on the development of homeopathy. Paracelsus realized that doctors needed to treat the patient with a substance similar to the illness. This is what became the focus of homeopathy.

Those ideas, however, were largely ignored until Hahnemann noticed them in the 1700’s.



Hahnemann did several things that allowed him to make a big impact on the world of medicine and healing:

- He followed his heart by becoming a doctor.
- Then he followed his heart again by giving up the practice of medicine.
- He made his living with other skills he had, and that led him to experiment with healing.
- His curiosity and conviction led him to find truths that transformed the concept of healing in the modern world.

What times in your life have you followed your heart, gut feelings, or your “inner beliefs” to take actions? Were you later glad that you did? When didn’t you take actions on something that felt right inside and you later regretted it?

Often, the circumstances or resources in our lives don’t allow us to do something that we feel strongly inside. How do you deal with those times?

Let us pray.

Dear Divine Love and Wisdom:

We thank you for the Inner Wisdom that lives inside of all of us, and allows to hear and feel Your presence with us. Help us in learning to better hear Your guidance and in taking that guidance into the world. Amen.

***Happy 328th Birthday, Swedenborg!***

***January 31, 2016***

**READINGS**  
**From the Bible**

**Psalm 77: 11-20**

I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

I will meditate on all your works  
and consider all your mighty deeds.

Your ways, O God, are holy.  
What god is so great as our God?

You are the God who performs miracles;  
you display your power among the peoples.

With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,  
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.  
Selah

The waters saw you, O God,  
the waters saw you and writhed;  
the very depths were convulsed.

The clouds poured down water,  
the skies resounded with thunder;  
your arrows flashed back and forth.

Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,  
your lightning lit up the world;  
the earth trembled and quaked.

Your path led through the sea,  
your way through the mighty waters,  
though your footprints were not seen.

You led your people like a flock  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron

**From Swedenborg**

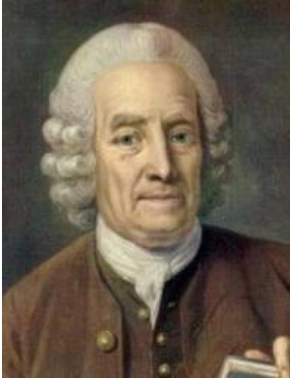
**Divine Providence #13 NCE**

I have stated on occasion that love is what constitutes our life, but this does not mean love separated from wisdom, or what is good separated from what is true in the cause. This is because love by itself, or what is good by itself, is nothing. Consequently, the love that constitutes our deepest life, the life that comes from the Lord, is love and wisdom together. So too, the love that constitutes our life to the extent that we are open to it is not love by itself in the cause, though it is by itself in the result. Love is incomprehensible apart from its quality, and its quality is wisdom. That quality or wisdom can come only from its underlying reality, which is love. This is why they are a single whole; and the same holds true for what is good and what is true.



## Message

# Happy 328th Birthday, Swedenborg!



Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688. At least he was by the Julian Calendar which was in use in Sweden until 1740. Had the current Gregorian Calendar been in use, Swedenborg would have been born on February 9th!

Many Swedenborgian churches celebrate Swedenborg's birthday every year. Of course we honor him because his writings inspired our denomination and branches of the New Church. But, beyond that, Swedenborg was an amazing historical figure. Let's honor his birthday this year by reviewing who he was in the context of his times – and why he matters in history.

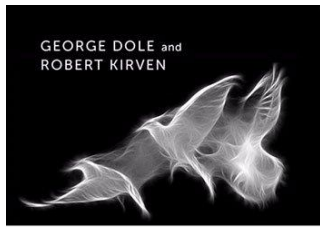
His birth was at the intersection of important historical movements. Up until then the world had been guided largely by religion. In the Lutheran Church, which was predominant in Sweden, "faith" was central: "*sola fide*" – faith alone.

But the fresh breezes of the Enlightenment were blowing throughout Europe. The philosopher Descartes emphasized the value of thought: "I think; therefore I am." The Cartesian movement was to value free inquiry in all matters; not to live by "faith" of the church without question.

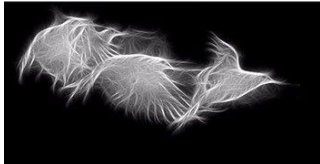
Our Emanuel grew up in the midst of these forces. And he became a significant unifying force to combine the head and the heart.

*For a quarter century before Emanuel's birth, the academic and religious communities of Uppsala had been involved in a heated argument: one side wanted to allow "Cartesianism" — the freedom of inquiry championed by the philosopher Descartes, who had visited Sweden shortly before his death there in 1650, while the other strove to maintain the old ways of teaching only what was approved by the church. In 1689, before Emanuel was two, Charles XI decreed that while the church tradition should continue to be the supreme authority for the theology faculty, all other departments of the university should be permitted complete freedom of inquiry. Excitement ran high.*

DOLE, GEORGE F.; KIRVEN, ROBERT (2015-05-01). A SCIENTIST EXPLORES SPIRIT: A BIOGRAPHY OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG WITH KEY CONCEPTS OF HIS THEOLOGY (Kindle Locations 157-160). Swedenborg Foundation Publishers. Kindle Edition.



A Scientist Explores Spirit  
A BIOGRAPHY OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG  
WITH KEY CONCEPTS OF HIS THEOLOGY



I have a special fondness for [that book](#). I was a student and then faculty member at Swedenborg School of Religion as George Dole and Bob Kirven were writing the book. I loved seeing their sense of excitement as they developed and wrote new sections, and then passed the drafts back and forth with on-going editing. They were especially pleased with the many photos and illustrations. They wanted to emphasize how the scientist Swedenborg came to incorporate spirituality into his science.

Emanuel's father was Jesper Swedborg. Jesper was a deeply religious man. He was 34 years old and a chaplain to the court of King Charles XI when Emanuel was born.

He was a Lutheran clergyman who was the court chaplain in Stockholm in Emanuel's early years. Later, he became a Bishop in the church.

In May of 1719, the Queen of Sweden ennobled all of the families of Bishops, so Jesper Swedborg's family became "Swedenborg".

Jesper's spirituality was different from the standard Lutheran theology, however; He was very much involved in pietism:

*He taught his children that spirits in the room observed every word and action. He particularly stressed the conviction (generally called "Pietism") that living a Christian life is more important than the more orthodox Lutheran virtue of doctrinal faith—"brain faith," according to Jesper. He is said to have read at the dinner table every night from Johann Arndt's True Christianity, a large work often called "the bible of Pietism."*

DOLE, GEORGE F.; KIRVEN, ROBERT (2015-05-01). A SCIENTIST EXPLORES SPIRIT: A BIOGRAPHY OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG WITH KEY CONCEPTS OF HIS THEOLOGY (Kindle Locations 212-214). Swedenborg Foundation Publishers. Kindle Edition.

*Pietism emphasizes a personal encounter with the Divine over an intellectual faith.*

*When Emanuel was four years old, Charles XI appointed Jesper to the faculty of the University of Uppsala as professor of theology. That had become a sensitive position, since disputes continued to rage between the theological faculty and all the others. Unable to challenge Charles's decree,*

*Aristotelians and Cartesians continued trying to convince each other regarding the appropriate principle for supreme academic authority.*

DOLE, GEORGE F.; KIRVEN, ROBERT (2015-05-01). A SCIENTIST EXPLORES SPIRIT: A BIOGRAPHY OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG WITH KEY CONCEPTS OF HIS THEOLOGY (Kindle Locations 217-220). Swedenborg Foundation Publishers. Kindle Edition.

*He also remembered that, from age twelve (as a university student), he started to “delight in conversing with clergymen about faith,” and experimented with hypoventilation or minimal breathing, which he would later observe as characteristic of his states of intense concentration.*

DOLE, GEORGE F.; KIRVEN, ROBERT (2015-05-01). A SCIENTIST EXPLORES SPIRIT: A BIOGRAPHY OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG WITH KEY CONCEPTS OF HIS THEOLOGY (Kindle Locations 223-225). Swedenborg Foundation Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Swedenborg was an academic – he started university at age 9. That was not unusual for the sons of university graduates. Emanuel became a well-respected scientist; traveled around the world learning various crafts and sciences. He helped found the first scientific journal in Sweden.

Yet, he was forever changed by dramatic mystical experiences. They made him into a mystic – yet he continued to be a scientist.

Emanuel's spirituality was strongly influenced by his father's pietism. And he spent a number of years living with his sister and brother in law – both strong advocates of the Cartesian scientific approach.

The scientific and mystical came together in him so that he could help us beyond *either/or* and into *both/and*. His approach was to combine faith and science – and to argue that neither could exist without the other. Margaret Wheatley, who brings spirituality to systems thinking shares a Sufi quote:

You think because you understand *one* you must understand *two* because one and one makes two. But you must also understand *and*.

WHEATLEY, LEADERSHIP AND THE NEW SCIENCE: DISCOVERING ORDER IN A CHAOTIC WORLD. P. 2

How can we best honor Swedenborg's birthday? How can we live with more *both/ands*?

In a world where political opponents are drawing their distinctions and nations are clarifying their differences, it's good to sometimes look at the *ands* of our commonalities.



## Homeopathy, Part 2

February 7, 2016

### READINGS From the Bible

#### **John 9: 1-7**

*Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind*

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

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

*After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "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

#### **Soul-Body, 14, XII**

*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.*

## Message Swedenborgians & Homeopathy

In our [earlier look](#) at homeopathy we saw the fascinating life of Samuel Hahnemann, [1755-1843] who followed his heart and helped develop a completely new model for healing.

This month, we're looking at people who lived out their beliefs, and brought some kind of change into the world. Hahnemann is one of those – as are the Swedenborgians who became involved in homeopathy because of him.



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## Hans Burch Gram [1786 to 1849]

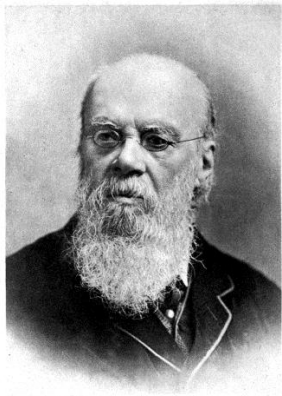


One of the first homeopaths in the US was a Swedenborgian named Hans Burch Gram. He lived in Boston. He believed that Swedenborg's writings were much closer to homeopathic principles than the work of Mesmer – who was a popular European hypnotist.

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 Clapp](#) of Boston. They distributed homeopathic remedies AND published works of Swedenborg's.

## James John Garth Wilkinson [1812 – 1899]



J. J. 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 especially The Doctrine of Correspondence.

### James Tyler Kent [1849 to 1916]



Dr. James Tyler Kent was the most influential homoeopathists 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 the two wives of Kent that brought him to both homeopathy and Swedenborg.

Dr. James Tyler Kent was born in Woodhull, 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 a 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 started his eclectic medical practice, but he practiced for only a very short period. He married but his wife died at the age of 19 soon after their marriage.

Dr. Kent moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1874, and practiced there for few years. He remarried again to an American Baptist girl at the age of 26. He became a very successful man which made him a member of the national eclectic medical institute.

When his wife suddenly fell ill, he tried many treatments, allopathy and eclectic to solve her problem but they all weren't helpful. 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 a 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 a 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 at the 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 American became quite intertwined with Swedenborg.

## 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 of local homeopathists 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 active life in both homeopathy and the Swedenborgian Church in Boston.

These are all people who allowed their inner visions to guide them, and as a result have helped to create a better world.

Where is your inner vision leading you?

Let us pray

Dear Divine Love and Wisdom we thank you for the work of the many people that helped us see alternative forms of healing. May we keep our hearts open to learning how Your healing energy is around us. Guide each of us in bringing our light into the world. Amen.



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*Lydia Maria Child*

*February 14, 2016*

**READINGS**  
**From the Bible**

**Amos 5:23-24 New International Version (NIV)**

Away with the noise of your songs!

I will not listen to the music of your harps.

But let justice roll on like a river,

righteousness like a never-failing stream!

**From Swedenborg**

**True Christianity 504:5**

“We are an organism that receives life,” I responded. “God alone is life itself. God pours his own life into this organism and every part of it, just as the sun pours its heat into a tree and every part of it. God grants us to feel his life in ourselves as our own. God wants us to feel this so we can live according to the laws of the divine design (that is, the commandments in the Word) as if we did so under our own initiative, and arrange ourselves to receive God’s love. Nevertheless, although God constantly keeps his finger on the pointer of the scales to keep us in check, he never violates our free choice by forcing us.

**Message**  
**Lydia Maria Child**



As we look at people who took their faith into their lives, let’s consider Lydia Maria Child. Lydia Maria Francis was born Feb. 11th, 1802 and died Oct. 20, 1880. She was born in Medford, MA, and was the youngest of seven children. Her father ran his own business and her mother was a baker. She was raised strictly in a Calvinistic household.

However, she was greatly influenced by her older brother who attended the local Congregational Church and went to Harvard College.

In 1814, after the death of her mother and the marriage of her older sister Mary, her father sent her to Norridgewock, Maine, to live with Mary and her new husband. There Lydia did a lot of reading and wrote letters to her brother at Harvard. She visited nearby Penobscot Native Americans, and became an advocate for Native American rights.



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In 1819 Lydia took a teaching position in Gardiner, Maine where she discovered the thought of Emanuel Swedenborg! She reassured her brother: "You need not fear my becoming a Swedenborgian ... I am more in danger of wrecking on the rocks of skepticism than of standing on the shoals of fanaticism. I am apt to regard a system of religion as I do any other beautiful theory. It plays round the imagination, but fails to reach the heart. I wish I could find some religion in which my heart and understanding could unite; that amidst the darkest clouds of this life I might ever be cheered with the mild halo of religious consolation."

In 1821, she was baptized at First Parish in Medford, MA. She moved in with her brother in Watertown where he was a Unitarian minister. However, despite what she had written to her brother, she did become a member of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem in 1822.

By the 1830s, however, she became frustrated with the lack of support there for the anti-slavery movement, and she questioned the Swedenborgian faith, wondering "whether such a church could have come down from heaven."

Even though that congregation may not have been pro-abolition, Swedenborg was certainly against slavery.

She eventually settled in the Unitarian Church.

While living in Watertown she published a novel: *Hobomok: A Tale of Early Times*--the first historical novel published in the United States. It was about a supportive relationship between a New England girl and a Native American. She continued to write stories and novels.

In 1828 Maria [the name she preferred after her baptism], married David Child, a lawyer active in justice issues. Together they became increasingly involved in the abolition movement. She continued to be an active writer; for the cause of freedom.

Unfortunately David became involved in some disastrous business dealings, and their finances suffered. Maria published *The Frugal Housewife*, which kept their finances together for awhile.

In the last year of her life, she wrote to friends, "The memory of the early anti-slavery days is very sacred to me. The Holy Spirit did actually descend on men and women in tongues of flame,... Ah, my friend, that is the only true church organization, when heads and hearts unite in working for the welfare of the human race."

The letter, towards the end of her life, shows how she brought her faith into her life: she saw a life active in justice work to be "the only true church organization." That was a bold statement. It was putting the actions of everyday on a higher plane than church structure. The real church, she claimed, was people working together for a better world! That was certainly a Swedenborgian sentiment.

**Ellen Spencer Mussey**

**February 21, 2016**

**READINGS  
From the Bible**

**1 Corinthians 13: 1-13**

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

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. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 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 childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor 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.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

**From Swedenborg**

**Heavenly Secrets, #39**

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. ...

Now, when love and faith have brought us to life and we believe that the Lord brings about all the good we do and the truth we speak, we are compared *initially to creeping animals of the water and birds flitting over the land and later to beasts. All these are animate and are called living souls.*

**Message  
Ellen Spencer Mussey**

This past October, a very exciting event took place: The Parliament of World Religions. This was only the 6th time it had occurred since it began in 1893. Swedenborgian Charles Bonney had suggested and planned a Parliament of World Religions as part of the Chicago World's Fair [largely planned and built by Swedenborgian architect Daniel Burnham.]





One of the delegates to the Parliament was Swedenborgian Ellen Spencer Mussey.

She lived from 1850 to 1936. She was born in Ohio as Ellen Spencer. Both of her parents died young. In 1869 she went to the District of Columbia to live with her brother Henry and sister-in-law Sarah Andrews Spencer, who was an active and well-known suffragist. After moving, Ellen happened to meet General Reuben Delavan Mussey, Superintendent of the Sunday school at our Washington, D.C. Swedenborgian Church. She, too, became a Sunday school teacher, helping to teach Mussey's children. Mussey's wife died, and he married Ellen in 1871.

The Mussey's became well-known in the social circles of Washington. They knew personally many Presidents. They developed a law practice together, but Ellen was not allowed to enter law school. Why? She was a woman. There were no women lawyers at that time.

Not to be deterred, she studied law on her own, and joined her husband in a joint law practice. General Mussey died in 1892, and Ellen now needed to practice law on her own. She easily passed the bar exam in Washington, and was admitted to the bar in 1893.

Shortly after this, she was appointed to be a Swedenborgian delegate to the Parliament of World Religions. She presumably knew Charles Boney, the Swedenborgian who inspired and organized it as part of Chicago's World Fair.

Ellen's talk at the Parliament specifically addressed women:

*Dear Sisters,*

*Let us fit ourselves and our daughters for a life of active use. Let us not be led astray by personal ambition or love of ease. Let us remember that every soul is accountable to God, and that we must form our opinions, even though they differ from those we love best. Let us not be disputatious, but rather help our brothers to see that when they shut themselves away from the womanly influence, they are in fact closing the higher or celestial plane of their minds, and so preventing the doctrines of the church from passing into life.*

There was also a women's congress held alongside the World's Fair where Susan Anthony was speaking. Many thousands of women – and many men – were there to attend those meetings.

Ellen came to see how essential organization was for the advancement of women. She returned to DC determined to become active in the women's movement.

Her law practice flourished, and she took on controversial cases. She campaigned to change laws that discriminated against women.

She wrote a strong letter to the *New Church Messenger* in 1898,

*What a loss it would have been to humanity if Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, and Frances Willard had been afraid of overstepping the bounds of womanly decorum. ... God made the bird to sing. He has made women to think and feel, and given them voices with which to be heard.*

Mussey was a woman whose Swedenborgian faith guided her into an active life of working towards justice.

What things from her life are inspiring for your life?

Let us pray: Dear God, inspire each of us to live each day as a special gift from You, and an opportunity to live our faith in the actions of each day.



*Julia Ward Howe*

*February 28, 2016*

## READINGS

### From the Bible

#### From the Bible

**2 Timothy 1:3-7** (New Revised Standard Version)

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

### From Swedenborg

#### Divine Love and Wisdom (Ager) n. 214

Affection, thought, and are also in a series of like degrees, because all affection has relation to love, thought to wisdom, and action to use. Charity, faith, and good works are in a series of like degrees, for charity is of affection, faith of thought, and good works of action. Will, understanding, and doing are also in a series of like degrees; for will is of love and so of affection, understanding is of wisdom and so of faith, and doing is of use and so of work; as, then, all things of wisdom and love are present in use, so all things of thought and affection are present in action, all things of faith and charity in good works, and so forth; but all are homogeneous, that is, concordant.

## Message Julia Ward Howe



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Did you know that the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* was written by Julia Ward Howe? During the Civil War, she was challenged to come up with better words to the song “John Brown’s Body.” And she did! Howe's famous lyrics were written in November 1861, and first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in February 1862. The song ties in concepts from Isaiah 63 and Revelations 19 with the Civil War.

I've written about Howe before in terms of her activities as an abolitionist, and her work on behalf of women that led to the creation of [Mother's Day](#).

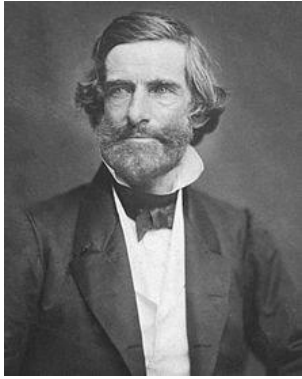
Julia Ward was an amazing woman – influenced by Swedenborg to make the world a better place. She did not live in an easy time for women. She was born in 1819 and lived until 1910. She was born in New York City to a stockbroker father and poet mother. She was only 5 when her mother died of TB.

The family enjoyed an upper-middle-class life, so Julia was sent to private schools and had tutors. She was a voracious reader, and found much to challenge the beliefs of her Calvinist father.

Julia's father died in 1839, and she went to live with her brother Samuel and his new bride. Sadly, Julia's sister-in-law and newly-born niece died during childbirth in 1841. Soon after that, she visited Boston where she met [Samuel Gridley Howe](#) (1801—1876). He was a physician and reformer who was quite concerned about education for blind and deaf children.

He had been to Europe to learn from the more-advance schools there about education for the blind deaf. He returned to the States to found the Perkins School for the Blind – named after the man who donated his estate to the school. Do you know who the most famous graduate of that school is? Swedenborgian Helen Keller!

Samuel and Julia became engaged and got married shortly after meeting –not long after deaths of her sister-in-law and new-born niece. It had not been very long since her father's death. Their marriage was a tumultuous one, and her biographers have sometime wondered whether she become engage too hastily.



Samuel Gridley Howe was twenty years older than Julia, and after their marriage – despite the protests of Julia's family - he took charge of the income received from her large estate. He was insistent that she stay home to be a housewife and mother.

Samuel Gridley Howe was a strong willed and controlling husband. He forbade Julia from working outside of the home. Clearly Samuel and Julia had very different ideas about the role of women!

She spent many years in an isolated cottage on the grounds of Perkins raising their six children.

Julia went through a period of depression, and wrote letters to her sisters of her sadness. The conflict between Sam and Julia got worse, and they separated in 1852.

They did get back together, but Julia changed her lifestyle. She became very involved in the reform movement and supported issues like abolition, women's rights, prison reform and education. She developed close friendships with important voices of her day-- William Ellery Channing, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Theodore Parker, Charles Dickens, William James, Sr., Longfellow, and Margaret Fuller.

By the time her husband died in 1876, she had established a career for herself as a reformer, a writer and a poet. However, due to bad investments of her husband and brothers, her family fortune was largely gone.

In the first journal entry after her husband's death Julia wrote, "Start my new life today!" And she did – with the 34 remaining years of her remarkable life.

She was co-editor and writer for *The Woman's Journal*, advocating for suffrage and other justice issues. She envisioned a Mother's Day, in which women from all over the world could gather to discuss world peace.

She also wrote travel books, children's stories, and music. She was friends with some of the greatest minds and inspirational people of her day.

Gary Williams, author of "[The Hungry Heart: The Literary Emergence of Julia Ward Howe](#)," has recently published a manuscript of hers dealing explicitly with gender politics in a work entitled, "[The Hermaphrodite](#)." He writes about the extensive impact that Swedenborg had on Julia's approach to the world.

In her autobiographical writing, [Reminiscences](#), she mentions her reading of Swedenborg a number of times:

*I read a good deal in Swedenborg, and was much fascinated by his theories of spiritual life. I remember "Heaven and Hell," "Divine Love and Wisdom," and "Conjugal Love" as the writings which interested me most; but the cumbrous symbolism of his Bible interpretation finally shut my mind against further entertainment of so fanciful a guest.*

**Julia Ward Howe. Reminiscences, 1819-1899 (Kindle Locations 2007-2009).**

I think one reason I am inspired by Julia Ward Howe is because of the reminder of how much harder life was for our sisters just a few generations ago. She had every advantage in life, and married a man considered progressive in his time. Even so, she suffered significant depression from the ways in which she was demeaned for being female. Yet she stood up to her oppression, and, as a result my own life benefits greatly.

I think of the many in her generation who fought to end slavery and to give women the right to vote.

Her husband, even though he brought much suffering into Julia's life, was instrumental in developing education for the blind and deaf – providing a new life for Helen Keller.

Julia, Helen – and so many more of her generation – were inspired by Emanuel Swedenborg – who continues to inspire so many of us today

It reminds me that things we do today to create a more just world – even though they may seem insignificant to us now –are making life better for the generations that follow us.

*Let us pray.*

Dear Lord, thank you for the work done by so many before us who have so much to make this a more just world. Help us to remember that our loving actions help us create a better world for those yet to come. Amen



## **John Newton & Amazing Grace**

**March 6, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

#### **1 Chronicles 17:16-17**

*Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said:*

*"Who am I, LORD God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, my God, you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant. You, LORD God, have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of men."*

[These verses were the text Newton used when he wrote "Amazing Grace."]

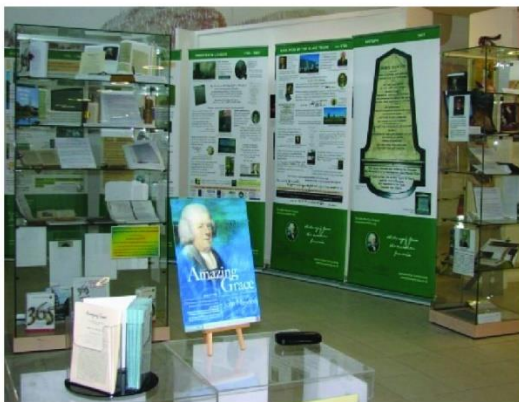
#### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Apocalypse Explained (Whitehead) n. 205**

*It is evident also from the representation of "David," as being the Lord in respect to Divine truth. By "David" in the Word the Lord is meant, because by "kings" in the Word the Lord in respect to Divine truth is represented, and by "priests" there the Lord in respect to Divine good. The Lord is represented especially by king David, because David had much care of the matters of the church, and also wrote the Psalms. (That "kings" in the Word signify Divine truth, and "priests" Divine good, see above, n. 31; moreover, that all names of persons and places in the Word signify spiritual things, which are the things pertaining to the church and to heaven, see above, n. 19, 50, 102.)*

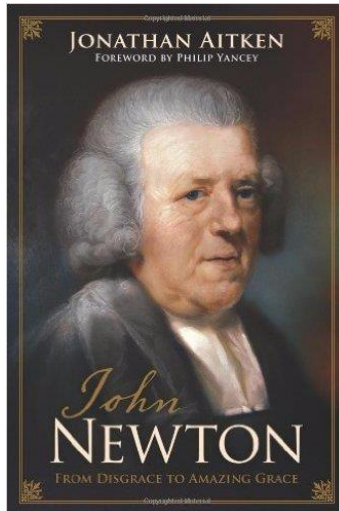
## **Message** **John Newton & Amazing Grace**

In 1807, the British slave trade officially ended. In 1807, John Newton died. Without Newton's influence, the slave trade would have continued for many more years with indescribable suffering and death.



2007 was the **bicentenary of both events**, which were honored by the **John Newton Project in England**.

Newton is perhaps best known for writing “Amazing Grace,” which, in many ways, is the story of his life. He wrote: *I was born in London ... in ... 1725 ... My parents, though not wealthy, were respectable. My father was many years master of a ship in the Mediterranean trade. In the year 1748 he went Governor of York Fort in Hudson's Bay, where he died in the year 1750.* His mother died when he was six, and his father's new family had little place for him. A biography of Newton was released in 2007: *John Newton: From Disgrace race to Amazing Grace* by John Aitken.



I downloaded the Kindle version onto my computer to look through it for today's message. However, I was so engrossed in this extremely well-written account of such a fascinating life, that I could not put it down.

In 1743, young Newton was grabbed off the streets and pressed into naval service. He tried to escape, and was brutally beaten. His attitude and behavior were an on-going problems for this superiors, and he was left in Africa to be held in brutal captivity. He was eventually rescued and returned to England to marry his childhood sweetheart and apparent soulmate. He worked on slave ships until becoming a captain. He was successful and prosperous in his work of selling slaves.

On March 10, 1748, his ship was caught in a terrible storm, and it did not seem likely that they would survive. He prayed for help, and when the storm ended, he knew there was a God. It was a powerful conversion experience that he honored throughout his life.

We are looking this month at how one's faith can be transformed into action in the world. One way is how it happened for Newton – a dramatic conversion experience.

Such an experience can lead from an inner ecstasy to an outer action for good in the world. Like many ecstatic experiences, he felt it deeply within. But it takes time for it to be absorbed and translated into action. For Newton, the process took many years.

*I went to bed that night in my usual security and indifference, but was awakened from a sound sleep by the force of a violent sea that broke on us. Much of it came down below and filled the cabin where*



*I lay with water. This alarm was followed by a cry from the deck that the ship was going down or sinking. ...*

*Atlantic was still high, even though the wind had somewhat abated. One or other of the two men must have made one last suggestion for shoring up the ship, for Newton concluded his side of the exchange with the somber statement, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy on us." As soon as he had uttered this sentence, Newton was astonished with himself. "I was instantly struck by my own words," he recalled. "This was the first desire I had breathed for mercy for many years." His amazement was understandable. Instead of the oaths, blasphemies, and rude rejections of God that habitually poured from his lips, John Newton had spoken the Lord's name with respect and reverence.*

## CHANGES IN NEWTON AFTER ENCOUNTERING GOD

### Methodist Movement

He began exploring the early Methodist movement. At that time, it was a controversial part of the Anglican Church. Its adherents were criticized for being "too enthusiastic" about their religion; meaning they had an evangelical fervor.

### Concerns about the poor

*Newton's turn toward Methodism was partly caused by his personal admiration for George Whitefield, partly by the style and substance of his hero's preaching, and partly by the social status of the population to whom Whitefield's message was primarily addressed - the poor of Liverpool.*

*Newton clearly had a growing heart for "the poorer sort" in society, for there are many references in his diaries to his quiet good works among the impoverished, the bereaved, and the sick of Liverpool.*

### Deeper Bible Reading

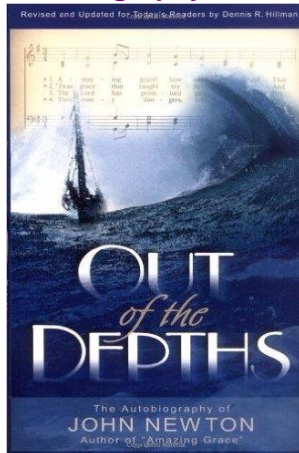
*Newton was not only reading his Bible for some three hours each day, he was also learning how to translate it from the languages in which it was originally written. His facility for Latin was extended to Hebrew and New Testament Greek.*

### Call to Ordination

Newton increasingly felt a call to ordination. He struggled between seeking it in the Anglican Church, and being ordained by one of the newer evangelical sects, such as the Methodists. He was turned down several times by the Church of England because he was too "enthusiastic" -- or involved with Methodists. He was on the verge of seeking an alternative ordination, when the influence of his friends led to his ordination as an Anglican priest.



## Autobiography



A friend and priest, Thomas Haweis, persuaded Newton to write the story of his journey from being a slave trader to a priest. Haweis helped the publication, *An Authentic Narrative*. It has been released in an updated version as ***Out of the Depths***.

### Life as a Priest

He was an active Anglican priest, serving two parishes over many years. He was strongly connected with the evangelical movement in the church, and was an inspiration to a great many people. He wrote many hymns; the most known being "Amazing Grace."

### Wilberforce

**William Wilberforce** visited Newton's parish as a boy and listened to him preach about the evils of slavery. As a young man, he sought Newton out in a new parish to seek help on how to respond to an incredible experience of feeling God's presence in his life. Wilberforce wanted to leave Parliament and seeking out a life in the church.

Here is where Newton had a profound impact: pointing out that serving God does not just happen within a religious life, but in the actions of the world. Newton felt that God was calling Wilberforce to fight slavery in the British Parliament.

*Perhaps the most important single episode in the correspondence came in July 1796 when Wilberforce wrote to Newton saying that he was considering retirement from public life. If this letter had received a reply supporting the suggestion that Wilberforce should leave Parliament, the loss to the abolitionist campaign would have been devastating. Fortunately, Newton strongly opposed Wilberforce's urge to end his political career, writing back to him on July 21, 1796 to say that his recent reelection as MP for Hull was a sign that God had further work for him to do:*

### Supporting Abolitionist Movement

Newton himself became quite active in the abolitionist movement. He wrote a popular and profound pamphlet about slavery.

*The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade recorded its decision on February 5, 1788 to send a copy of Newton's *Thoughts* to every member of both Houses of Parliament. This distribution was carefully timed. The next mention of the pamphlet in the minutes confirmed that all MPs and peers had received their copies before Wilberforce introduced his motion for a bill to abolish the slave trade on February 18. Newton's first publication as an abolitionist campaigner*

*certainly reached the right people, for in a matter of days the right people were wanting to reach him. In the third week of February, Newton received an invitation to give evidence to the Privy Council.*

Newton gave testimony in the Parliament about the evils of slavery.

The bill to abolish the slave trade passed parliament on Feb. 24, 1807. Newton died Dec. 21, 1807.

There were many years between his conversion in 1748 and his starting his first parish as a priest in 1764. His was a life that impacted countless people and was instrumental in ending the slave trade in Great Britain. His life was truly an example of "amazing grace" in action.

Newton and Wilberforce undoubtedly knew about Swedenborg's writings. Many early Swedenborgians were quite active in the abolitionist movement. One such man was [Carl Bernhard Wadstrom](#) who was an active Swedenborgian in the abolitionist movement. There were a number of times that he and Wilberforce worked together on their common cause. Given that Newton worked closely with Wilberforce and Wadstrom, it seems likely that Newton had some familiarity with Swedenborg.

For more information on Swedenborgians who were involved with abolition, read the pdf entitled [Swedenborg, Swedenborgians and Slavery](#).



"Amazing Grace", the 2007 film, is available on [YouTube](#), [Amazon.com](#) and Netflix. The official website is [AmazingGraceMovie.com](#)

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, thank you for the life of John Newton. Despite his serious sins early in his life, he encountered You and became an active servant of Yours for justice. Please help us to learn from his life, and to find ways that today, in this world today, we can bring these same attributes into the world today.

## **William Wilberforce & Amazing Grace**

**March 13, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

**Exodus 2:23**, New International Version (NIV)

During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.

#### **From Swedenborg**

**True Christianity 504:5**

*A human being is an organ of life, and God alone is life. God pours his life into the organ and all its parts, as the sun pours its warmth into a tree and all its parts. Further, God grants people a sense that the life in them seems to be their own. ... Our free choice results from the fact that we have a sense that the life we enjoy belongs to us.*

## **Message** **William Wilberforce and Amazing Grace**

As the War of Independence was coming to a close between Great Britain and the States, the war on slavery was just gaining steam.

Swedenborgians were actively involved in that war.



If you saw the movie, *Amazing Grace*, you saw the inspiring life of **William Wilberforce** who fought to end the British slave trade in England. Wilberforce had been inspired by **John Newton**, a former slave ship captain who had an epiphany, and wrote *Amazing Grace*. Read Newton's story in an earlier [message](#).

If you haven't seen the movie, *Amazing Grace*, you might like this short summary of Wilberforce's life: [video](#).



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Wilberforce was not a Swedenborgian, but he had read Swedenborg. [See [The Life of William Wilberforce](#) by Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, p. 82.]



Other abolitionists were inspired by Swedenborg. A Swedenborgian in the United States active in the abolition movement was **Lydia Maria Francis Child** [1802-1880]. She learned about Swedenborg when she was a teen-ager in Gardiner, ME and joined the church in 1822.

*“Unfortunately, because she did not believe that the ministers were taking a strong enough stand against slavery in their sermons, she soon became disgruntled with their leadership. Childs could not understand why many of the clergy did not become more actively involved in social movements. In spite of her feeling toward the church organization, the ideas of Swedenborg permeated her thoughts and writing and she believed that the only true church organization is one in which heads and hearts unite in working for the welfare of the human race.”*

*“In 1828, Lydia Maria Francis married David Lee Child, a Boston attorney and Massachusetts legislator. Through William Lloyd Garrison, an active abolitionist, the couple became more aware of the horrors of the treatment of Africans in the slave states.”* [Susan Poole, 5]

*In 1833 she wrote: An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans, the first anti-slavery book published in the U.S. In this work she promoted emancipation and an end to racial discrimination, using historical, political, economic, moral, ad spiritual arguments to show that Africans were intellectually and spiritually equal to others.* [Poole, 5]

*Child was determined to be one of the few who took action against the horrors of slavery. In her view, which parallels Swedenborg’s beliefs, apathy was considered to be a great sin. Swedenborg believed that people should take their talents, skills, and loves, and put them into use.”* [Poole, p.6]

In 1841, she became editor of *The Anti-Slavery Standard* in New York.



*Julia Ward Howe* [1819-1910] was another activist. During the Civil War Julia Ward Howe wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." As she became more famous, she was frequently asked to speak publicly. She began to speak about the horrors of war, and became an advocate for peace.

She worked with the widows and orphans of soldiers on both sides of the war.

In 1870, she decided that peace and equality were the two most important things in the world. She called for women to rise up and oppose all forms of war.

She wanted to create a Mothers' Day for Peace, and published "A Mother's Day Proclamation" calling women to pacifism. See a [previous message](#) about her involvement in the early history of Mother's Day.



**Lucretia Coffin Mott** [1793-1880] was another Swedenborgian active in the early anti-slavery movement.

*“She helped establish the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, but was barred from the international anti-slavery convention in London in 1840 because she was a woman. Focused on the Women’s Suffrage Movement. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Mott organized the Women’s Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York. Worked closely with Harriot Hunt. [Poole, 105]*



At the June, 2013, annual Convention in Urbana, Ohio, a mini-course on human trafficking was presented by Lois Krebs and Rev. Nadine Cotton entitled: *Slavery Has NOT Been Abolished: The Nightmare of Human Trafficking.*

*It is the 150th year anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, but this document and the civil war did not put an end to slavery. Believe it or not, the buying and selling of human beings for forced labor and for commercial sex is a thriving and expanding industry today and happening in the U.S.*

For more information, visit the Health and Human Services website on human trafficking.

Swedenborgians have been at the forefront fighting, and in the background inspiring, to end slavery throughout their history.

It is not a surprise that now, in 2016, Swedenborgians are becoming involved in ending modern

slavery: human trafficking. Swedenborgians were instrumental in ending the slave trade and slavery. We can expect, again, that their involvement will bring an end to this affront to Divine Love and Wisdom.

Let us Pray.

*Dear Lord, give us the Heart to examine our own lives in true clarity. Show us where we are enslaved and where we enslave others. Help us to daily see the truth of our living slavery. Bless those who are too weak to break the bonds of slavery and give them the glory of freedom. May Love and Peace reign in their lives forever. Thank you Lord for your daily Blessings. AMEN.*



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**Carl Bernhard Wadstrom**

**March 20, 2016**

## **READINGS**

### **From the Bible**

#### **Luke 19: 36-40**

As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 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, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

#### **Luke 22: 39-46**

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Arcana Coelestia 9212: 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).

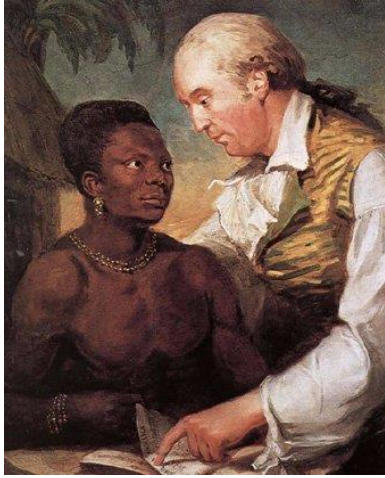
## **Message**

### **Carl Bernhard Wadstrom: Swedenborgian Abolitionist**



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Last week, we celebrated the movie *Amazing Grace* and the extraordinary life of [William Wilberforce](#).



One of the people working with Wilberforce was a Swedenborgian, **Carl Bernhard Wadstrom** [1746-1799]. Wadstrom is perhaps one of the best known Swedenborgians involved in the British abolition movement.

Wadstrom was Swedish, and the time frames of his life overlapped with Swedenborg's life [1688-1772]. He was impressed with Swedenborg's references to Africans in the spiritual world, and felt that he had to take a stand against slavery.

He worked with a number of people, including British Swedenborgians, to set up a colony on the coast of Sierra Leone for freed slaves. The colony was attacked by French privateers in 1795, and most of the settlers were killed. The colony eventually failed.

Wilberforce called a number of witnesses in the British House of Commons in support of ending the slave trade. One person he called on was Charles Bernhard Wadstrom.

We have been looking at some Swedenborgians who were involved with the abolition movements in the US and Great Britain. However, Rev. Dr. James writes:

*Despite a robust European Swedenborgian legacy of fighting the slave trade as embodied in the visionary work of Carl Bernhard Wadström, American Swedenborgians were not conspicuous anti-slavery voices or workers in Antebellum America. In fact, though contemporary Swedenborgians have shown a tendency to cherry pick and generously interpret that history, a close reading of Swedenborgian discourse in Antebellum America in sermons, pamphlets, articles, and personal correspondence up through the end of the American Civil War in 1865 reveals a church movement that was a little behind the curve.*

*The reasons why are complicated, but they start with the fact that Swedenborg was not a social reformer theologian in a modern sense and did not address specific social issues in his expansive theological corpus. This included the institution of slavery even though it was prominent in the London where he spent altogether some thirteen years working on his spiritual books.*

*Scholars on Swedenborg –Swedenborgians and the Original Black Lives Matter Movement: How the First George Bush Confronted Racial Justice Passivity in the Churches* by James F. Lawrence, Dean, Center for Swedenborgian Studies of the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley)

Lawrence's words are helpful to remind us that, although there were some outstanding Swedenborgian abolitionists, there were many more Swedenborgians who did not get involved.

This is a good point to ponder as we move into Holy Week. It is a week in which we see one of the most joyous events in the life of Jesus – the ride into Jerusalem. And we see some of the most treacherous behavior towards Jesus in his life with Judas betraying him and then the passion of the cross on Friday.



It can be difficult to select a theme for a Palm Sunday message. One can focus on the joy of Jesus riding into Jerusalem with people waving palms of greeting. Or one can focus on Jesus' time in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, "Let this cup pass from me" or the pain and agony of Jesus on the cross praying "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

In our readings today, I have included one passage on the joy of the palms, and one on the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; a pivotal point that turned the week starting with palms into one ending with pain, passion, and prayer.

Holy Week is a long journey that reminds us of Swedenborg's process of regeneration. It is a long road, with much struggle, before one reaches "union." In many ways, Holy Week is a condensed version of that journey. When you make the decision that you want to walk a spiritual path, then you are also deciding to walk through all of the bumps and potholes in the road.

Often, our first sense of God is a glimpse of something beautiful and peaceful calling to us – like the triumphant ride into Jerusalem. To respond to God's call feels joyous and liberating. At the beginning, there is excitement about beginning a new journey. There are so many hopes and dreams that lie ahead.

Following God's will is easy on Palm Sunday; riding a donkey into a cheering crowd! It's harder to maintain the commitment through the long road into Jerusalem, Jesus had an intense week. He attended a Passover supper with his disciples, at which one of them betrayed him. He went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.

The path became harder, and Jesus' prayers were deeper: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done."



The path strewn with palms led into the Garden of Gethsemane. How many times have you prayed for God to give you something that you want? How often do you pray the way Jesus did, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

This is the most important part of the prayer. We live in an era when many people try to "create their own reality" by focusing on the things they want, and trying to bring them into their lives. However, this is often done by focusing on what the ego wants – not on checking out God's will.

We often pray for something specific: a new job, a satisfying relationship, and good health. So often, our prayers are telling God what we want God to do for us.

In the garden, Jesus asks for what he wants, but he emphasizes that he wants God will to be done.

*The divine design is that we arrange ourselves for receiving God and prepare ourselves as a vessel and a dwelling place where God can enter and live as if we were his own temple. ... This is the divine design we follow, and have to follow, to go from being earthly to being spiritual. The Lord had to go through the same process to make his earthly human manifestation divine. This is why he prayed to the Father. This is why he did the Father's will. This is why he attributed everything he did and said to the Father. This is why he said on the cross "My God, my God, why have abandoned me?" ...In this state God appears to be absent.*

True Christianity 105

Many white/powerful people chose a comfortable and safe path for themselves during abolition – not getting involved. That included many Swedenborgians. But Wadstrom was different. That is true also of Newton and Wilberforce [not Swedenborgians.] They all chose to follow what seemed to them to be the will of God. And they suffered for it in many ways. They had many hardships along the way, but their actions were instrumental in the crumbling of slavery.

This week is a time to pray, "Not my will, but Thine be done," and listen for God's whispered calling and encouragement.

Let us pray: Dear Divine, be with us during this week ahead which joyous events and tragic events, before we reach the glory of Easter next Sunday. Be with us as we walk this journey, remembering to pray to you for Your will in each of our lives. Amen.

## ***Easter & U.S. Abolitionists***

***March 27, 2016***

### **READINGS From the Bible**

#### **Matthew 28: 1-10, New International Version**

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

There 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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then 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."

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

### **From Swedenborg**

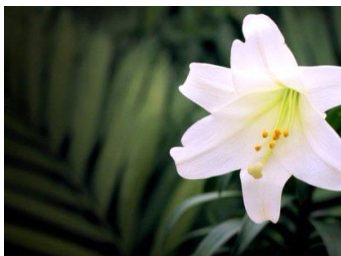
#### **True Christianity 114**

Suffering on the cross was the final trial the Lord underwent. It was a means of glorifying his human nature; that is, of uniting that nature to his Father's divine nature. ...

If ever the world was in need of Easter, it is now. This past week we had horrific terrorist attacks in Belgium, following so many terrorist attacks around the world in recent years.

## **Message**

### **Easter & U.S. Abolitionists Influenced by Swedenborg**



How do we cling to a belief in a world of love and peace with such terror and hate all around us?

Easter is about regeneration – not just of ourselves, but of the world.

It can be understood as a hologram. Every part of a hologram contains the whole. Jesus was a

correspondence of God – and we all are.

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.”

Easter is not about Jesus leaving the earth for heaven; it is about how the Divine is always with us right here on the earth. Not just “with us” but part of each of us!

Easter is about entering the state of “regeneration.”

The crucifixion and resurrection are about Jesus entering complete regeneration. Swedenborg called the process Jesus went through *glorification*, which is the human journey of regeneration.

It was achieving complete oneness between the Divine and the human -- the Divine Human.

We need to learn to *behave* differently, and then to *become* different. When we do that, Swedenborg says we come into a state of union with God. This is what happened for Jesus on the cross: *The state of glorification is also the state of union.* The resurrection is an affirmation that humanity and Divinity are one.

Easter is not about how God will take evil out of the world. It IS about each of us, with God, needing to take whatever steps we can to turn hatred into love. We will transform the world.

There is no better example of people walking with God to change the world than the abolitionists of slavery. We’ve been looking at some of the U.S. Abolitionists who were influenced by Swedenborg – including Lydia Marie Child, Julia Ward Howe, and Carl Bernhard Wadström,

Another one was discussed a couple weeks ago by Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence on a [blog](#) of the Swedenborg Foundation.

Dr. George Bush was professor of Hebrew at New York University. His brother was Timothy Bush, the great-grandfather to George Herbert Bush and great-great grandfather to George Walker Bush [43<sup>rd</sup> President].

Dr. Bush was a respected university professor who became interested in mesmerism, and from that learned about Swedenborg. He converted from his role as Presbyterian clergy to Swedenborgian. He became the leader of the New York Society. He was quite impressed with a man named Andrew Jackson David, who claimed to channel Swedenborg in trances. This got Bush in hot water with fellow Swedenborgians, most of whom saw Davis as a fraud. Eventually, Bush came to see that Davis’ channelings were different from Swedenborg’s theology.

Lawrence writes in his [blog](#):

Bush felt by the late 1840s that the general silence in the Swedenborgian Church on slavery could not be excused, and he began correspondence with several Swedenborgians he knew of on both

sides of the question He planned a running dialog to air the issues in the *New-Church Repository*, a publication he founded and edited. The resulting series—“Aphorisms on Abolition and Slavery”—spanned 1852 and 1853 and was also re-published in *New Church Miscellanies* (1855) with additional information regarding its origins. The series represents the only systematic Swedenborgian conversation on the slavery question in Antebellum America.

Lawrence says that the slavery conversation went underground among Swedenborgians until the civil war started, at which time the anti-slavery feelings among Swedenborgians became quite fervent.

Bush died before that point, in 1859. Lawrence [writes](#):

*Yet, 160 years later as his country still wrestles painfully with an ongoing Black Lives Matter movement, the work of the first George Bush still peals forth like a trumpet calling Swedenborgians not only to hear human justice principles aright in Swedenborg's theology but to apply them socially.*

What does this say to us about Easter today? Slavery was one of the most evil human practices on the earth. It came to an end by human beings working in harmony with God and each other to bring about change. It was a long and bitter process. Today we deal with the remnants of slavery in institutional racism and in other types of slavery like human trafficking.

The evil of slavery is not unlike the evil of terrorism. They both come from human beings choosing selfish goals over God's Love and Wisdom. But, God is the ultimate and strongest force of existence. Love is stronger than hate. Love will always win out; it just might take some time for good people to walk with God to bring it about it.

Easter is a reminder of that. We can never cease to exist, because we are united with God. As the God-Human, we are always growing and changing. We have eternity in which to explore all that we can be in this universal hologram. This gift is not limited to those of any particular religion or belief; instead it is the right of all human beings to move into union with God. Jesus modeled for us how this can happen by how he lived his life.



Easter is a time to look at new births taking place inside of each of us, to share the births with each other, and to bring them into the world, where love continues to conquer hate.

Let us pray.

Dear Creator: We thank You for the blessings of this most glorious of holidays – the celebration of resurrection and new life. Help us to remember to matter how bad things get on the earth, You are more powerful than hatred. And You walk with us in Love to conquer all the evils of the earth.

## Heaven in a Wildflower

April 3, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

##### Job 12:7-10

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In [the Lord's] hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.*

##### Revelation 4:6b-11

*And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne . . . they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."*

#### From Swedenborg

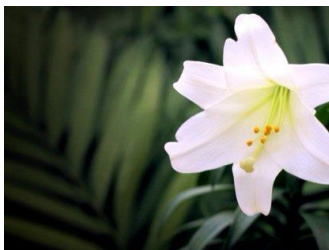
##### True Christianity 8

*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.*

##### Heavenly Secrets 6190

*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.*

## Message Heaven in a Wild Flower



We are in the Easter season! We celebrate the resurrection, as parts of the world celebrate the spring that follows winter. Swedenborg tells us that the resurrection of Jesus is an expression of rebirth and renewal. We also see this concept in the earth itself; year after year SEPISEP

Swedenborg has a radically profound understanding of the earth. All of creation is not just FROM God; all of creation IS God. Jesus was not the son of God; Jesus WAS God. God came to the earth in the body of Jesus. The same God is constantly flowing into the earth through what Swedenborg calls "influx."



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*Of the influx of heaven into the world, and of the influx of the soul into all things of the body, from experience ... Nothing exists of or from itself, but from what is prior to itself, thus all things from the First ... Hence it is plain that all things subsist perpetually from the first esse, because they exist from it.*

*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines 277*

“Esse” is the Latin verb “to be.” It is that which is. That which first existed, to Swedenborg, was The Lord.

*Hence it is plain that all things subsist perpetually from the first esse, because they exist from it ... The all of life flows in from the First, because it is thence derived, thus from the Lord ... Every existere is from an esse, and nothing can exist unless its esse be in it.*

*Hence it is plain that all things subsist perpetually from the first esse, because they exist from it ... The all of life flows in from the First, because it is thence derived, thus from the Lord ... Every existere is from an esse, and nothing can exist unless its esse be in it.*

For Swedenborg, “existere” is that which is emerging from the “esse” – it is all of creation that comes forth from the Lord. Everything that exists is that which emerges from the Lord. This is radical! NOTHING can exist unless “esse” – the Lord – is in it. All of humanity exists because God is flowing into us. All of the animals exist because God is flowing into them. All of the plants exist because God flows into them.

*There is a general influx, its quality (n. 5850). It is a continual effort of acting according to order (n. 6211). This influx takes place into the lives of animals (n. 5850). And also into the subjects of the vegetable kingdom (n. 3648). That thought is formed into speech and will into gestures with man, according to this general influx (n. 5862, 5990, 6192, and 6211).*

*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine 277*

What is even more radical from Swedenborg is that even the rocks and the soil are “existere” – emerging through God flowing into them.

This is so radical that it basically takes us into quantum physics to understand it.

*The Divine is the same in the greatest and the smallest things.*

*Divine Love and Wisdom 77*

George Dole says that that quote from Swedenborg reflects the Blake poem quoted at the top of the page. Dole was thinking about this concept when he started reading Karl Pribram and David Bohm, quantum physicists. They said that the new physics showed the universe to be a hologram. Dole wrote:

*The result of all this is that I am coming to see Swedenborg’s theology different than I did before. I am coming to see it composed of a central holographic concept ...*



The new physics talks about how the universe consists of both particles and waves. The particles are the solid matter of the world that we can touch. The waves are energies that can't be seen or touched. Dole sees the waves as Swedenborg's "inflow." We have inflows that come to us internally and some externally. Our conscious self is at the center – at the intersection of the two waves. This is basically how one makes a hologram – a flow from a single source is divided into direct and indirect flows. They meet in an intersection pattern. That means that the whole universe is in every grain of sand – and in every cell of our bodies.

What does that mean for my life and your life? Dole writes:

*Perhaps the central ethical import of the Swedenborgian of the holographic model is to point to the possibility of moving beyond the need to define ourselves by excluding others, which for me gives a particular clarity to the injunction that I love my neighbor as myself.*

And we need to love nature as ourselves; because it is part of us. If we dis-respect nature, we are dis-respecting humanity. If we dis-respect humanity we are disrespecting God.

We truly are all one.



So now we can see the depth in Blake's words: "a heaven in a wildflower." Heaven is in the wildflower. God's loving existence flows into the flower. All of heaven is inside of each little flower.

This is radical. From a Swedenborgian perspective, Eco theology is about how the entire world IS God

## All God's Creatures

April 10, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### Genesis 9:8-11

*Then God said to Noah. . . , 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.'*

#### From Swedenborg

#### Conjugal Love, 133

*Both the higher and lower animals, land animals, birds of the air, reptiles, fish and insects are born knowing all that their loves require for their lives; for instance, everything they need to know about feeding, about where to live, how to copulate and produce young, and how to bring up their young. They established these facts by remarkable observations which they recalled to mind from what they had seen, heard and read in the natural world - as they called our world where they had previously lived - where the animals which exist are not representative but real. When they had fully proved the truth of this proposition, they turned their minds to seeking and finding the purposes and reasons which would explain and elucidate this question.*

## Message All God's Creatures

***"If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature—even a caterpillar—I would never have to prepare a sermon, so full of God is every creature."***

Meister Eckhart

*All God's critters got a place in the choir.* I love the image of a choir coming together with all types of critters -- birds and fish and animals of every kind. Not all of them have hands to clap, so they clap their paws or whatever they have!

This is Earth Day month. I think of all God's critters coming together from all corners of the earth to help create a world that is safer for all of us.

Creation Justice Ministries of the National Council of Churches is focusing this Earth Day on *Care for God's Creatures*.

***How great are Your works, O God! You made them all with wisdom, the earth is full of Your creatures***

Psalms 104:24

### Mass Extinction

It's hard to believe that the earth is undergoing a mass extinction of our creatures. The very existence of one in five species is threatened!



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***In the United States, the Endangered Species Act has served as the “Noah’s ark” of our time, ensuring protection for creatures in peril. The ark in the Genesis flood narrative is how, God “remembers” (i.e., holds, keeps, protects, cares for) “all the wild animals and all the domestic animals” (Gen. 8:1). Today, we are called to be mindful of all creatures, and to take stock of their presence.***

*[from Care for God’s Creatures.]*

What kinds of relationships do you have with God’s creatures? Do you have pets? Do you feed animals in the park – or in your back yard? Do you go to zoos? Do you walk in the woods and enjoy the many critters there?

***“The fate of humans and the fate of the animals are the same: as one dies so does the other; both have the same breath.”***

Ecclesiastes 3:19

### **Emily the Cow**

My favorite animal story is about Emily, the cow.

I was teaching at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, MA in the 1990’s. One day, students and faculty all piled into cars for an unusual field trip to the Peace Abby in Sherborn, MA. There I met Emily, the cow.

This Peace Abby had always honored pacifists like Gandhi and conscientious objectors in war. They had “peace seeds” of prayers from interfaith traditions.

Then, their mission expanded in 1995 when a cow jumped the fence at a nearby slaughter house. Emily’s story appeared in a local newspaper.

She hid in the woods for 40 days and 40 nights until, on Christmas Eve, she was rescued by the Peace Abby and given a permanent home on their land. People came from all over the world to meet Emily until she passed away from cancer in 2003. Then people came to see the bronze statue of Emily.





I was one of many who petted Emily, and then couldn't eat another hamburger.

Remember to enjoy the presence of God's creatures on God's earth this week!

Let us pray:

Dear Lord of All Creation, we thank You for the incredible beauty of the Earth and all of the creatures on it. Help us to become more aware of the many creatures with whom we share this sacred space. Help us remember to honor their presence with us as we share our beloved Earth. Help us to remember to love and care for all the living things You have so lovingly created. Amen.

## Creation & Earth Day

April 17, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

##### John 1:3

*All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

##### Psalm 19:1, A Psalm of David.

*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

##### Colossians 1:16-17


*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

#### From Swedenborg

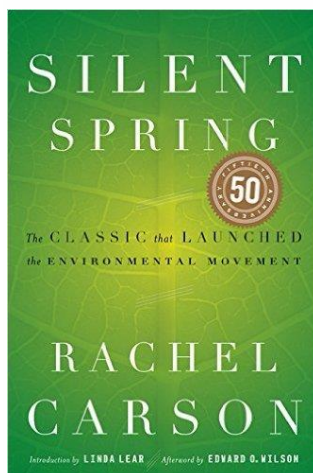
##### Apocalypse Revealed (Rogers) n. 290290

*And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying. (5:13) This symbolizes a confession and glorification of the Lord by angels of the lowest heavens.*

## Message Creation & Earth Day

What were you doing on April 22, 1970? 

Many of you, of course, were not yet born, or were young children. I had just graduated from college as a social studies teacher, and was in my first year of teaching. "Earth Day" was initially seen as a radical, anti-war event. But as we got closer to April 22nd, the idea caught on the mainline media, and the high school officials asked me to set up an assembly for the day!



One of Earth Day's initial inspirations may have been Rachel Carson's New York Times bestseller *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book sold half a million copies around the world; and it planted a seed for the environmental movement.

*Earth Day 1970 capitalized on the emerging consciousness, channeling the energy of the anti-war protest movement and putting environmental concerns front and center. The idea came to Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, after witnessing the ravages of the 1969 massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Inspired by the student anti-war movement, he realized that if he could infuse that energy with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution, it would force environmental protection onto the national political agenda.*

from the [Earth Day website](#)

One way the church honors God's earth is through hymns, such as "All Things Bright and Beautiful."

It was published in 1848 in a hymn book for children, designed to raise money for deaf-mutes. It was written by Mrs. Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95), wife to an Anglican Archbishop, as a way of expressing the opening of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

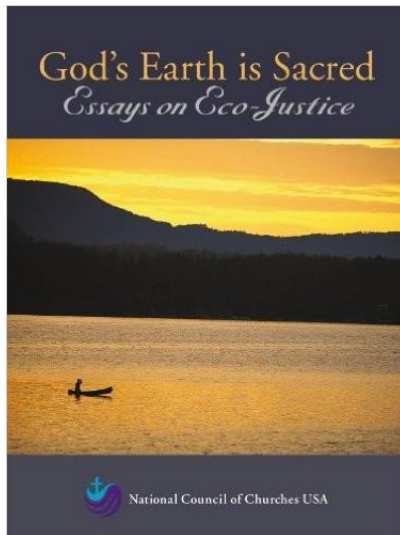
The original song had a verse that seemed to praise social hierarchy, but it was removed along the way. The tune, *Royal Oak*, was arranged by Martin Shaw in 1915 from a traditional melody celebrating the restoration of Charles II in 1660.

"For the Beauty of the Earth," was written by an Englishman from Bath, England: Folliott Piermont (1835-1917). He was a teacher and a writer, publishing seven volumes of poems and hymns, many of them having a focus on nature and is especially remembered for composing, *For the Beauty of the Earth*.

He wrote it at age 29 on a beautiful spring day near Bath. He was overwhelmed with emotion, which he tried to express in this song.

It was set to the tune of "Dix" by composed Conrad Kocher (1786-1872).

The Christian church has not always regarded living and working within God's creation enough but used scripture to justify dominating nature instead.



I'm impressed with a book by the National Council of Churches eco-justice unit: [God's Earth is Sacred: Essays in Eco-Justice](#).

This book is a collection of essays looking at responses to the Earth from various religions.

The essays in this book point out that historically, the Christian Church has not always supported the environment. Author Laurel Kearns discusses the concept of "dominion". She says that in 1967 historian Lynn White charged that "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt" for the ecological crisis because of its interpretation of dominion, from Genesis 1:28.

*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

Gen. 1:28, King James's Version

A concept of "stewardship" has grown from Genesis 2:15.

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.*

The concepts of "dominion" and "stewardship" have become terms of ruling over the environment. Kearns writes:

*The dominant interpretation that emerged in the past few hundred years leaned toward interpreting the concept of dominion as a human dictatorship in which all of the non-human subjects are viewed as "resources" for the dictator's advancement or betterment. This is why so much of the work of contemporary Creation care advocates focuses on reinterpreting human relationships with the rest of the Creation and advocating the human role of caretaker/steward instead of reckless consumer or selfish overlord.*

Fortunately, Swedenborg offers a different interpretation of the following passages. They are

Swedenborg's view of Gen. 1:28 from "Secrets of Heaven".



*Anything we do on our own is evil through and through, but since we are engaged in the process of being reborn, we have a trace—the smallest possible trace—of goodness. [4] Later, as faith becomes more closely connected with love, it grows larger—a plant. When the connection is completed, it turns into a tree, and then the birds of the heavens (which here as before [§§11; 40:1, 3; 48] are true ideas, or the contents of the intellect) nest in its branches (the facts we know). When we are spiritual people or are becoming spiritual, we are subject to conflict; and this is why it says harness the earth, and rule.*

He sees this as a directive from God to working on becoming spiritual, by addressing our inner conflicts. [SEP] [SEP]

*And Jehovah God took the human and put the human in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it. The Garden of Eden symbolizes everything in a heavenly person, which is the subject here. Cultivating the garden and guarding it means that such a person is free to enjoy all of those things but not to claim personal possession of them, because they are the Lord's.*

Secrets of Heaven 122, Genesis 2:15.

*Heavenly people acknowledge, because they perceive, that absolutely everything is the Lord's. Spiritual people too acknowledge it, but only in speech, because they have learned it from the Word. Worldly and body centered people do not accept or agree with the idea; they claim as their own any ability they discover inside themselves, and if they lose it, they consider it completely destroyed.* [SEP]

Secrets of Heaven 123

Swedenborg uses scripture to honor the respect for the Earth that is celebrated on Earth Day.



Dear Creator: We honor and celebrate the beauty and wonder of Your creation! Help us, in this Earth Day week, to hold the Earth close to our hearts and bring our loving actions to all aspects of Your world. Amen.

## Swedenborg & Earth Day

April 24, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### Psalm 65: 9-13

You care for the land and water it; You enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so You have ordained it. You drench its furrows and level its ridges; You soften it with showers and bless its crops. You crown the year with Your bounty, and Your carts overflow with abundance. The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

#### From Swedenborg

#### Apocalypse Revealed (Rogers) n. 290

And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying. (5:13) This symbolizes a confession and glorification of the Lord by angels of the lowest heavens.

That it is a confession and glorification of the Lord by angels of the lowest heavens is apparent from the series, because the preceding confessions and glorifications of the Lord were made by angels of the higher and lower heavens (nos. 275ff., 286ff.). For there are three heavens, and in each countless societies, every one of which is called a heaven.

It is apparent that angels are meant by every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea, for we are told, "I heard (them) saying," and they said "Blessing and honor and glory and strength be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

## Message Swedenborg & Earth Day

This "Earth Day" week is a good time to honor some of the people who have worked to improve our environment – and have been influenced by Swedenborg in doing so.

Dr. Devin Zuber, Associate Professor at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, an affiliate of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) at Berkeley, California, wrote in the April 2013 Messenger that he started his doctoral dissertation with the question:

*"How was it that several of the writers who were seen as foundational for American environmentalism – such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and John Muir – were also readers to one degree or another of Swedenborg?" He then said: "I was particularly intrigued by what seemed to be echoes and traces between their absorption of Swedenborg's theology of correspondence and their various projects to spiritualize natural experience outdoors: to turn the mountains into 'sermons written in*



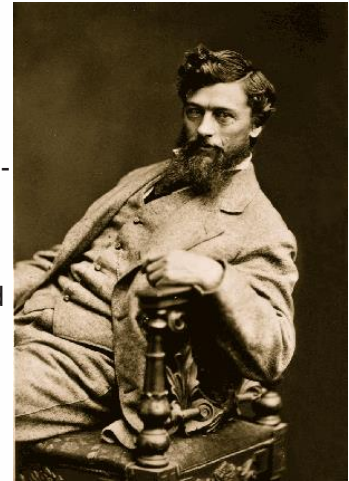
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*stone,' in John Muir's memorable phrasing, and locate spiritual truths in an aesthetic encounter with wilderness, almost as if nature were a divinely written text that had to be described and decoded."*

Let's look briefly at some of the environmentalists who may have been influenced by Swedenborg:

### WILLIAM KEITH 1838 –1911

Keith was a Scottish-American painter known for his landscapes of California. He was born in Scotland and then immigrated to New York in 1850 with his mother and sisters. He went to school and then did engravings and illustrations until 1859 when he moved to San Francisco. He was an engraver while studying painting, and become well-known for his water-colors and oils.

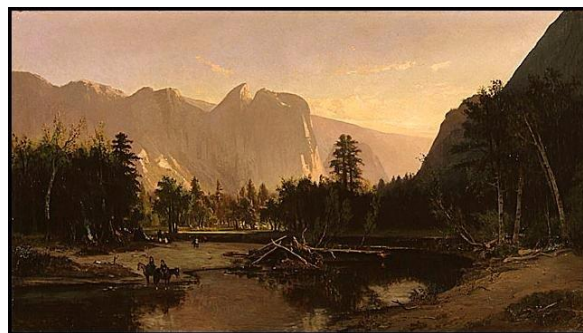


He was introduced to naturalist John Muir by mutual friend Jeanne Carr. Keith and Muir became part of a supportive group of naturalists and painters.

Keith produced early landscapes of breathtaking views of the Sierras. Keith painted many of the landscapes that Muir wrote about. Keith was part of the Barbizon school of painting, that influenced George Inness and the Hudson River school.

*Like the Eastern painter George Inness, Keith became an adherent to Swedenborgianism and believed that his late, dark, indistinct works better suggested the spiritual reality that lay beyond the surface forms of nature.*

Muir and Keith made activist environmental trips in 1907 and 1909, for Muir's final environmental crusade to save the Hetch Hetchy Valley of California, now part of the Yosemite National Park, from being flooded to be a reservoir for San Francisco.



Yosemite Valley, 1875, by William Keith

*Muir held up Keith's [paintings of the valley](#) during a plea before Congress, asking members to "preserve (the valley) in pure wildness for all time for the benefit of the entire nation." Keith was also one of the founders of the Sierra Club.*

Zuber asks in his Messenger article:

*How many readers of the Messenger are aware that the idea for the Sierra Club was conceived in the art studio of William Keith, the Swedenborgian landscape painter, one of John Muir's closest friends?*

One of Keith's best friends was Swedenborgian minister Rev. Joseph Worcester and two of Keith's [murals hang in the San Francisco church.](#)

### GEORGE INNESS [1825-1894]

Another well-known Swedenborgian landscape painter was George Inness.

He was born in the Hudson River town of Newburgh, New York. When his family moved to Newark, New Jersey, Inness began work as a grocer's clerk before finding a better position with a map-making firm. Self-taught at first, he began painting seriously in 1841 and had his first exhibition at the National Academy of Design four years later.

During the 1860s Inness became increasingly devoted to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. At the 1893 Chicago fair, Inness was the best-represented American, with fifteen paintings.



Inness's devotion to Swedenborgian doctrine led him to create a form of visionary landscape. He helped develop the "Hudson School" of painting, which had been influenced by the Barbizon school.



The Monk, 1873, by George Inness

Inness always felt a spiritual empathy for the Earth. He often stated he was not out to glorify nature, 'but to express its hidden spirit and underlying character.' At the heart of this approach to painting was Inness's understanding of the aim of art, which was "not to instruct, not to edify, but to awaken an emotion."

The following is an article, entitled *White House Names Rev. Kim Morrow Champion of Change*, is reprinted from the October 2015 *Messenger*.

The White House has recognized Rev. Kim Morrow as one of twelve faith and lay leaders named Champions of Change for their efforts in protecting our environment and communities from the effects of climate change.

Rev. Morrow is a religious environmental leader who is passionate about helping people respond to the environmental urgencies of our time in ways that are community-based, theologically motivated and hopeful. She serves as executive director of [Nebraska Interfaith Power & Light](#), a non-profit whose mission is to facilitate the faith community's response to climate change. For the last five years, she has also served as Minister of Sustainability at First Plymouth Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, and now serves as a climate change resource specialist at the School of Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.



Rev. Morrow presents at churches regularly on the link between faith and climate change, and her work has fostered a host of programs including ecologically themed worship services, conferences on faith and climate, and church farmer's markets.

Rev. Morrow is an ordained minister in the Swedenborgian Church and lives in Lincoln with her two daughters. Before her move to Lincoln, she was the development director at the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley.

Swedenborg has inspired many people who have worked, and currently work, on environmental change in many arenas – including the arts.

We can each do something today -- even if it is to stop and give thanks for a beautiful flower – created by the Divine – and on earth to enrich the spirituality of all creation.

Let us pray: Dear Creator,

Help us to remember to do something every day to help us bring about a sustainable earth. Let us honor the action that we can do each day, even it doesn't look great and momentous. Help us remember the great and momentous change can come from the little actions of a great many every day. Amen.

## **Swedenborg & Healing**

**May 1, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

#### **Psalm 98**

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.

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

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.

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

Make music to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and the sound of singing,

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

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

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**

#### **Heaven and Hell, 489, 3**

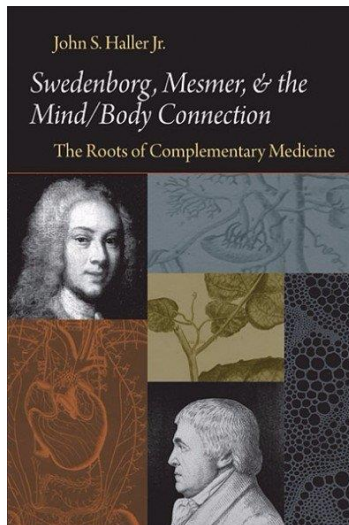
Those that have applied the doctrines of the church which are from the Word immediately to life, are in the inmost heaven, and surpass all others in their delights of wisdom. In every object they see what is Divine; the objects they see indeed with their eyes; but the corresponding Divine things flow 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).

## **Message Swedenborg & Healing**



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We have only two months left of the yearly theme: “The Year of Spiritual Uses.” We’re into our final subtopic of the year: “Bringing Love into the World.” Our focus for this month is “Using Healing to Share Love.”



A helpful book to look at is: ***Swedenborg, Mesmer, & the Mind/Body Connection: The Roots of Complementary Medicine*** by 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.*



Haller says of Swedenborg:

*He has been viewed as a genius whose vision and visions were marks of seminal importance. 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.*

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.*

-Kindle: 1021-1037

### **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.

How have you felt God’s healing energy at work in your life?

Let us pray:

Dear Divine: Thank you for the blessings of Your divine healing energy that is always flowing into us. Help us learn to turn to this energy to help us heal in times of sickness and despair. Help us learn how to share Your healings with others in need. Amen.



## **Faith of our Mothers**

**May 8, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Exodus 7: 8-9, 20-24**

*The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "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." ....*

*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. 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.*

*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. Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river.*

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **Secrets of Heaven 7337**

*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.*

## **Message Faith of our Mothers**



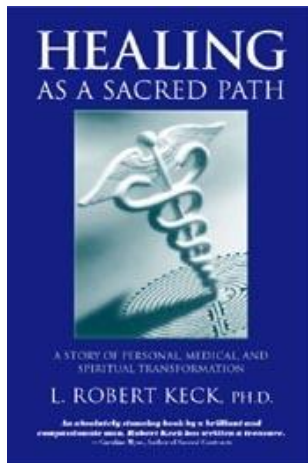
The young pregnant woman checked into a Mennonite hospital, with her husband at her side. It was 1935 in Northern Iowa and Francis Keck had had other births at home. However, she lost a child in home birth, and felt she'd better be in a hospital this time.



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The night before giving birth, Francis prayed with her husband, Roger. As they were in prayer, they felt an incredible, overwhelming presence of God. They committed themselves to raising their child to know God, and that when grown, the child would dedicate her/his life to the service of others.

The next day, Bob was born.



The commitment of his parents – and especially his Mother – brought many experiences of healing into Bob’s life right from the beginning. That was fortunate, as he had many obstacles to face, as he discusses in his book: [\*Healing as a Sacred Path: A Story of Personal, Medical, and Spiritual Transformation\*](#), published by the Swedenborg Foundation in 2002.

Francis and Roger agreed that they would not tell Bob about their divine encounter before his birth; they didn’t want to influence him on finding his own path.

As a young boy, Bob 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 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.

Bob was only 13 in 1948 when he contracted polio. In his book, he calls this experience a “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 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.

Bob was not to be deterred from his passion for sports, 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 parents – and especially his Mother -- continued to be a major support to him through all of his ups and downs in childhood. They did not breathe a word to him about the miraculous holy encounter they had had before his birth.

Bob soon began his freshman year, playing 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!

Then one evening, while he was pondering his choice, he was invited to a worship service given by a Methodist minister visiting his campus. 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 – to the shock of his friends but support of his wife. He needed to tell his parents, and didn't think he should do it over the phone, so he took off in his car for Des Moines.

He writes:

*One of the most extraordinary revelations of my entire life was waiting for me as I drove ... I knew Mom and Dad would be loving and affirming ...but I certainly expected them to be surprised and shocked... After I finished and waited for their reaction, it was I who was shocked.*

Francis and Roger simply looked at each other and smiled. Then they told Bob the story of the prayer before his birth. Bob was amazed at how God had been working in his life since before his birth!

Bob entered seminary and became a Methodist minister.

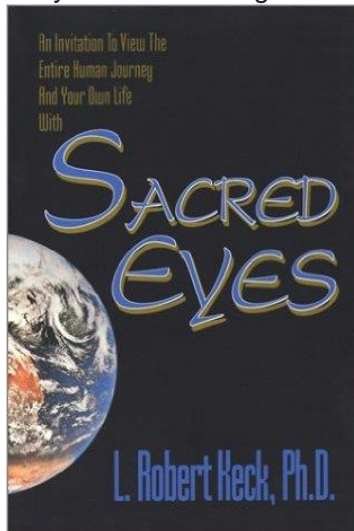
The quiet commitment and inner knowing of his parents had helped to keep his life on track through many twists and turns!

Later, in the 1960's, Bob became an unexpected 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:

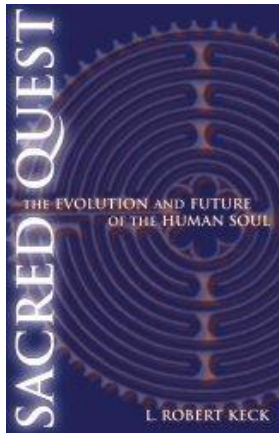
*"Miracle" is a legitimate word to use in our attempt to understand the mysterious healings that can and do occur. It is, however, not something conferred upon one from the outside, but something that breaks through from within, an awakening to the potential that was and is always there. Developing our 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.

Bob Keck, who passed away in 2004, had a life with many twists and turns! Every “disaster” in his life became the seed for yet another miracle. The loving presence of his parents was at the center of these “miracles” as they held in their hearts the conviction that God was guiding their son.

Bob was nurtured and inspired by his Mother. He was also “mothered” by his father, and by many others he has encountered in his life.

Today, we honor Mothers – birth Mothers, foster Moms, and adoptive Moms. We also honor “mothering” – a deeply compassionate way we support each other on our lives’ journeys.

Who have been the people whose mothering have made a difference in your life? How have you nurtured or do you nurture others?

These are the true miracles in our lives.

Let us pray:

Dear Divine Mother, help us to feel Your mothering presence that is with us at all times. Guide us in sharing a nurturing love to others. Bless all of those who are Mothers on this earth; those still with us and those who have passed into Your heavenly realm. Please especially be with those Mothers who live in poverty, sickness, or despair, and yet continue to provide a nurturing presence to those in need. Help us today in our honoring of all Mothers! Amen.

## ***Shamanic Soul Healing***

***May 15, 2016***

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

#### **John 15: 5-9**

The Vine and the Branches

"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. 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. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

#### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Secrets of Heaven 9031: 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. It has often been used in indigenous cultures to describe a type of healing. Usually it involves someone who has a special calling to serve as a healer in their community. Sometimes they contact the spirit world for help; often they use altered states of consciousness to heal at a soul level.



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Swedenborgian Dr. Stephen Larsen has written a lot about Shamanism. He says in the Forward of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book, [The Shaman's Doorway: Opening Imagination to Power and Myth](#):

*The modern shamanic path consists in a creative and affirmative relationship to life. It will be impossible to have true believers or card-carrying shamans because we are to be found among all arts and professions: therapists, artists, clergy, writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers. The creative shaman is the person who dedicates him/herself not only to visionary experience, as I hypothesized in this book a dozen years ago, but to the revelation and sharing of the experience. Thus our lives are made richer day by day, year by year, by an influx of creative works into them: the gifts of wonder.*

Larsen Ph.D., Stephen (1998-03-01). [The Shaman's Doorway: Opening Imagination to Power and Myth](#) (Kindle Locations 111-115). Inner Traditions/Bear & Company. Kindle Edition.

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 might journey 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

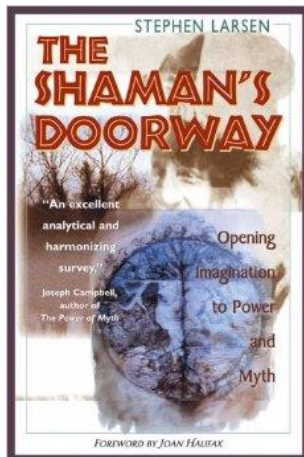
Western medicine strives to find medicine that will cure everyone with the same illness. The "one method/one pill cures all" idea doesn't work in shamanism, however. The shaman seeks the right healing for this person at this time.

## HEALING VERSUS 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 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.

Larsen sees Swedenborg as a good example of a shaman. 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.

We are all healers. We are each making our own spiritual journey of regeneration, as we help others along the way.

Let us pray.

Healing Spirit, Please open our hearts to your ever-present inflow of Divine Love, and help us to allow this Love to heal on all levels. May we take this healing love into the world to share with all whom we meet.

## ***Healing with Quimby***

**May 22, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Exodus 6: 1-11**

New International Version (NIV)

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."

God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

"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. 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. 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.'"

Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go, tell Pharaoh King of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country."

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **Heavenly Secrets 2870 and 2872**

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 neighbor, consequently with the love of what is good and true, is true freedom, being the freedom that exists in heaven.

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 Healing with Quimby



Some 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.

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 later 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 at 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.

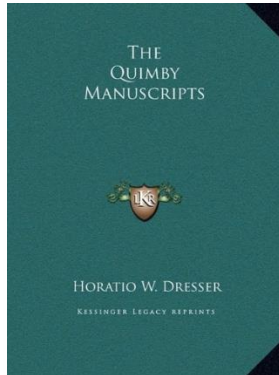
Quimby had a number of famous patients in his room on Exchange St. in Portland. They included:

Mary Baker Eddy  
Warren Felts Evans  
Julius Dresser  
Annetta [Seabury] Dresser  
Horatio Dresser

Julius and Annetta met in Quimby's waiting room, 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 a while, and was the pastor in Portland, Maine, from 1919-1920.

The last five years of Quimby's life were exceptionally hard. His waiting room was overcrowded with patients, and he was 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*.

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 some of his patients. Here are some things that are mentioned in a lot of the material:

#### Explanations to the patient.

He was convinced that illness and suffering were errors 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.

There has been a lot written about Quimby and about the various healing movements that grew from his work. One person who wrote about his approach was Horatio Dresser, son of Annetta and Julius Dresser – who met in Quimby's waiting room.

Horatio had become a Swedenborgian minister, and argued that some of Quimby's views were Swedenborgian, but many weren't.

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.*

The real difference between "New Thought" healers like Quimby and Swedenborg is in what Dresser calls "idealism." He argues that new thought writers believe that only ideas exist. The physical world doesn't exist; only the ideas of the mind.

Dresser ridicules this New Thought concept:

*One might neglect the bodily conditions of disease and almost come to believe that nothing exists save when we are thinking 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. ....*

He goes to say that...

*Swedenborg ... 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). ....cease to think about it.*

There are many healing modalities and numerous theories behind them. Many people have had personal healings – from a wide variety of approaches.

Have you experienced some form of "healing" in your life? What did it mean for you, and how do you explain what happened?

Let us pray: Dear Divine Healer, help us to open our heart to Your ever-present healing. Let us recognize our intrinsic wholeness, and strive towards it with Your help. May we be healers for each other and for our planet. Amen.

## Healing Ourselves

May 29, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

**Exodus 20: 8-11**, New International version

*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

#### From Swedenborg

**Secrets of Heaven 10730**, NCE

*And on the seventh day there shall be to you holiness, a Sabbath of Sabbath to Jehovah. That this signifies the second state of the regeneration of man, when he has conjunction with the Lord; and that in the supreme sense it signifies the union of the Lord's Human with the Divine Itself; is evident from the representation of the Sabbath, as being the second state of the regeneration of man, when he is in good, and thus is led by the Lord (see n. 8510, 8890, 8893, 9274); and as being in the supreme sense the union of the Human with the Divine Itself in the Lord (n. 8495, 10367, 10374). For when the Lord was in the world, He first made His Human Divine truth; but when He went out from the world, He made His Human Divine good through a union with the Divine Itself that was in Him. In the supreme sense this is represented by the Sabbath, and therefore it is called "a Sabbath of Sabbath to Jehovah." The Lord does the like with the man whom He is regenerating. He first imbues him with truths, and afterward by means of the truths He conjoins him with good, thus with Himself. This is represented by the Sabbath in the relative sense; for the regeneration of man is an image of the glorification of the Lord; that is, as the Lord glorified His Human, so He regenerates man. [2] By the "Sabbath" in its proper sense is signified rest and peace, because when the Lord united His Human to the Divine Itself He had peace, for the combats then ceased, and all things in the heavens and in the hells had been reduced into order. And accordingly there was peace not for Him only; but also for the angels in the heavens, and for men on earth, there were peace and salvation.*

## Message

### Healing Ourselves: Sabbath of the Soul



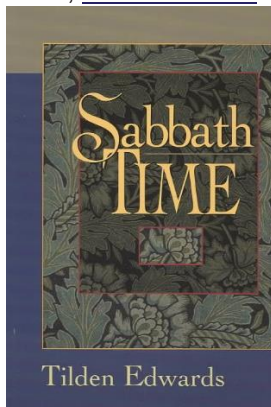


About 15 years ago, I studied spiritual guidance through the Shalem Institute in Maryland. Most of the program we could do from our homes, but we had to spend ten days each of the two years at the Shalem Institute. Quickly I became engaged in the rhythm of the days, filled with lectures, small groups, and personal reflection time. I wasn't sure what to expect on the week-end, however, when we were told we would have a Sabbath quiet time, led by the Rev. Tilden Edwards. It began Friday evening and was to continue until Monday morning. It was to be a time of silence, but not a time alone. We had specific times to gather for readings, inspiration, music, and movement. The instructions were simple: we were to let God guide us in how to use this time.

Tilden wrote in his 1992 book, [\*Sabbath Time\*](#):

*Buried deep in Jewish and Christian traditions we find this rhythm of time anchored in the Sabbath. Sabbath time at its heart is an opportunity for special practice of unambiguous receptivity to the free gift of life in God. This practice is meant to both balance and ground our working time. It needs to be recovered and offered in fresh forms today. ...love in the triune God is open, connecting, freeing, playful, and painful, transforming. Its two faces are labor and rest, ministry and Sabbath.*

*A rhythm of Sabbath and ministry time is a foundational discipline, a framework for all our disciplines. It is a rhythm that God provides to human life for its care, cleansing, and opening to grace. This rhythm is not for one day or one week or one year only. It is for life.* [Quoted from his book, [\*Sabbath Time\*](#) by Tilden Edwards]



Tilden Edwards looks at "Sabbath" as not so much a particular day of the week, but rather a quality of living our lives that we should incorporate into every day, particularly like what Edwards says in his book:



*Harvey Cox notes that the Hebrew word for God's resting used in the fourth commandment literally means 'to catch one's breath.' He suggests that God and people are essentially meant to do nothing but 'breathe' during this time, as a source of renewal. In this way Sabbath connects with certain Asian contemplative practices of just sitting and attentively breathing, as well as with historical Christian practices." [Edwards, p. 59 from Harvey Cox, *Turning East*, Chapter 5 'Meditation and Sabbath.'*

This ties in with the Shalem Institute's approach to "contemplative spirituality."

For Swedenborg, the concept of "Sabbath" was not so much a particular day, as it was a correspondence for the highest level of regeneration:

*A further reason a heavenly person is identified as Sabbath rest is the fact that struggle ends when a person becomes heavenly. Evil spirits retreat and good ones move closer. Heavenly angels approach too, and when they are nearby, evil spirits, unable to be anywhere near, escape far away. Because we have done none of the fighting ourselves—the Lord does all the fighting for us—he is the one said to rest. [Secrets of Heaven 87]*

A Sabbath time of resting in God's presence can be a contemplative approach to spirituality. In this approach, we are not trying to do a particular meditative practice or spiritual discipline. We simply are "being" with God in the world. Or as Swedenborg would say, we are opening our hearts to the inflow of Divine Love.

When do you have sacred time for your soul in your life? When can you build in quiet times of awareness of God's presence? It can be any day of the week, or any part of any day. Whenever it occurs, it is your soul's Sabbath.

Let us pray.

Dear God of Rest and Renewal,

Help us to remember that nurturing ourselves is an important part of living a life of uses and creating the "New Jerusalem." Guide us into times of Sabbath for the soul. Amen.

## What is Prayer?

June 5, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### Matthew 6: 9-13, NIV

*This, then, is how you should pray:*

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

#### From Swedenborg

#### Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 2535

*He shall pray for thee. That this signifies that it will thus be revealed, is evident from the signification of "praying." Prayer, regarded in itself, is speech with God, and some internal view at the time of the matters of the prayer, to which there answers something like an influx into the perception or thought of the mind, so that there is a certain opening of the man's interiors toward God; but this with a difference according to the man's state, and according to the essence of the subject of the prayer. If the man prays from love and faith, and for only heavenly and spiritual things, there then comes forth in the prayer something like a revelation (which is manifested in the affection of him that prays) as to hope, consolation, or a certain inward joy. It is from this that to "pray" signifies in the internal sense to be revealed. Still more is this the case here, where praying is predicated of a prophet, by whom is meant the Lord, whose prayer was nothing else than internal speech with the Divine, and at the same time revelation. That there was revelation is evident in Luke: It came to pass when Jesus was baptized, and prayed, that the heaven was opened (Luke 3:21). In the same: It came to pass that He took Peter, James, and John, and went up into the mountain to pray; and as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and glistening (Luke 9:28-29). In John: When He prayed, saying, Father glorify Thy name, then came there a voice from heaven: I have both glorified, and will glorify again (John 12:27-28); where it is plain that the Lord's "praying" was speech with the Divine, and revelation at the same time.*

## Message What is Prayer?



Emanuel Swedenborg did more than write about spiritual concepts; he lived a spiritual life. His life was filled with prayer, meditation, dreams, and mystical experiences. It can be difficult to find the words to discuss one's prayer life, but Swedenborg left us some poignant passages.



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## **PRAYER AS TALKING TO GOD**

*Regarded in itself prayer is talking to God ... (Arcana Coelestia (Elliott) n. 2535.)*

So prayer is, quite simply, talking to God. True prayer comes from our attempt to bring a spiritual perspective to what we are praying for.

When Swedenborg wrote about prayer, he was NOT referring to our taking a “wish list” to God of things we wanted in our life. He emphasized that true prayer came from our depths.

*To which there answers something like an influx into the perception or thought of the mind, so that there is a certain opening of the man's interiors toward God; .... If the man prays from love and faith, and for only heavenly and spiritual things, there then comes forth in the prayer something like a revelation (which is manifested in the affection of him that prays) as to hope, consolation, or a certain inward joy. It is from this that to "pray" signifies in the internal sense to be revealed.*

When we pray from the sincerity of our heart, God responds to us with an influx which allows us to open more fully to God. God gives us a “revelation” which brings up hope and even joy.

*Still more is this the case here, where praying is predicated of a prophet, by whom is meant the Lord, whose prayer was nothing else than internal speech with the Divine, and at the same time revelation.*

*When Jesus prayed, he was having internal dialog with God, and also revelation of his purpose and mission. There is a hint that as we ourselves move through regeneration to unity with the Lord, then we, too, can begin to develop an inner dialog with God.*

## **PRAYER FOR REPENTANCE**

Prayer is an important part of repentance. Repentance is Swedenborg's first stage of “regeneration” or spiritual growth. This is where we need to begin to pray.

*There are two duties that we are obliged to perform after we have examined ourselves: prayer and confession. The prayer is to be a request that [the Lord] have mercy on us, give us the power to resist the evils that we have repented of, and provide us an inclination and desire to do what is good since without him we cannot do anything. [John 15:5]. The confession is to be that we see, recognize, and admit to our evils and that we are discovering that we are miserable sinners.*

*In this situation, prayer is acknowledging our weaknesses; it gives us understanding of our self, and a release from our guilt. (True Christian Religion n. 539 [NCE])*

## **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Prayer is about helping those in need.

*When a man is in the life of charity he continually prays, not with the lips but with the heart. (Arcana Explained 325)*

*The worship of the lips without the worship of the life avails nothing (Arcana Coelestia 7884)*

Whatsoever we ask from the Lord and not from ourselves; that is, whatsoever we ask from the faith of charity or genuine love of use to the neighbor, that we receive. (Arcana Explained 411) [L] [SEP]

## THE LORD'S PRAYER [L] [SEP]

The Lord's Prayer was especially important to Swedenborg in his own spiritual life. [L] [SEP]

*Whenever I have been reading the Lord's Prayer, I have plainly perceived an elevation toward the Lord which was like an attraction, and at the same time my ideas were open, and from this there was effected a communication with some societies in heaven; and I noticed that there was an influx from the Lord into every detail of the prayer, thus into every idea of my thought that was from the meaning of the things in the prayer. The influx was effected with inexpressible variety, that is, not the same at one time as another; hence also it was made evident how infinite are the things contained in the prayer, and that the Lord is present in every one of them.* [L] [SEP] (Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 6476)

He wrote more about The Lord's Prayer in his spiritual journal [L] [SEP] Spiritual Experiences (Odhner) n. 1790 [L] [SEP] 1790. [VOLUME 2, second part, containing paragraphs 1790 to 3427



How do you prefer to communicate with God?

How does God prefer to communication with you?

Next week we'll look more at "meditation" in relationship to "prayer."

Let us pray:

Dear Divine Love and Wisdom, help us each to find our pathway to communication with You. Guide in ways to recognize our oneness with Divine Love and Wisdom, and to share this with other.

## **What is Meditation?**

**June 12, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Luke 11: 1-4**

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

*He said to them, "When you pray, say:  
"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.*

*Give us each day our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' "*

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 6476**

*Whenever I have been reading the Lord's prayer, I have plainly perceived an elevation toward the Lord which was like an attraction, and at the same time my ideas were open, and from this there was effected a communication with some societies in heaven; and I noticed that there was an influx from the Lord into every detail of the prayer, thus into every idea of my thought that was from the meaning of the things in the prayer. The influx was effected with inexpressible variety, that is, not the same at one time as another; hence also it was made evident how infinite are the things contained in the prayer, and that the Lord is present in every one of them.*

## **Message** **Definitions of Prayer and Meditation**



Do you ever meditate? If so, think about who taught you, and how you do it. Do you ever pray? If so, think about who taught you and how you do it.

I learned to pray in church. I was taught that prayer was thanking God or praising God or asking God. It was done with words, sometimes said in unison or by the pastor on behalf of all.

I learned to meditate as a young adult, when we Boomers discovered Eastern religions. Meditation was a structured experience; using some technique to go within where we could sense, feel, understand the Divine.



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The "[Meditation Station](#)" defines the difference between prayer and meditation this way: "during prayer, we ask God for something ... during meditation, God speaks to us."

The Shalem Institute says that contemplative prayer is a "loving quality of presence in which one is open to things just as they are." Meditation is when we are doing something structured – such as repeating a mantra.

Anne Lamott says there are two prayers: "Help me, help me, and help me." And "thank-you, thank you and thank you."

Robert Benson says "I try to remember that all of my time in prayer has not been glorious, and so the fact that things are not so glorious, does not release me from my obligation to say prayers."

Not all prayer is verbal. Dorothy Day said that she sometimes had no words for prayer, but needed to pray with action, like feeding the poor. I think this approach to prayer is consistent with Swedenborgian theology.

### **Swedenborg's View**

Does Swedenborg distinguish prayer and meditation in his writings? Yes! In Arcana #2535, he says:

*That this signifies that it will thus be revealed, is evident from the signification of "praying." Prayer, regarded in itself, is speech with God, and some internal view at the time of the matters of the prayer, to which there answers something like an influx into the perception or thought of the mind, so that there is a certain opening of the man's interiors toward God; but this with a difference according to the man's state, and according to the essence of the subject of the prayer. If the man prays from love and faith, and for only heavenly and spiritual things, there then comes forth in the prayer something like a revelation (which is manifested in the affection of him that prays) as to hope, consolation, or a certain inward joy. It is from this that to "pray" signifies in the internal sense to be revealed.*

Swedenborg sees the Lord's Prayer as especially powerful.

*The ideas of my thought were then always opened toward heaven, and countless things flowed in, so that I observed clearly that the ideas of thought taken from the contents of the Prayer were filled from heaven. And such things were also poured in as cannot be uttered ...A 6619*

Swedenborg seems to see prayer as speech with God primarily for the benefit of another.

He sometimes uses "meditation" in a negative sense:

*I have talked after their death with some people who during their earthly lives had renounced the world and devoted themselves to a virtually solitary life, wanting to make time for devout meditation by withdrawing their thoughts from worldly matters. They believed that this was the way to follow the*

*path to heaven.*  
*[H & H, 360].*

Other times he uses “meditation” as a kind of union with God:

*At that point I fell into a meditation based on the myths of the most Ancients, reflecting on how they pictured Aurora, the Dawn, as having Silver wings and carrying gold in her mouth...mentally taking great Pleasure in these sights, I came into my spirit. TC 1: 112*

## Brain Studies



Neurotheology looks at prayer and meditation in terms of our brain. The field of Neurotheology combines the study of the brain with theology. Many of these studies look at prayer and meditation as one, and see that they produce brain change.

Newberg and D’aquili (2001, pp3-10) studied Tibetan Monks and Franciscan Nuns as they engaged in deep meditation and prayer. *They found an increase of neurons within the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain associated with attention and concentration.*

*However the parietal lobe, the area associated with time and space, showed very little activity. With limited neuronal activity, the parietal lobe is unable to distinguish the boundary between the external world and the physical self. This could account for the mediators reporting a ‘sense of unity’ with the universe and a ‘mingling with God’ during intense trance (Newberg et al 2001, p7).*

Researchers at the University of California, San Diego, believe they have found the ‘God Spot’, an area of the brain which becomes hyper sensitive and stimulated during moments of deep religious reflection. Located within the frontal cortex, this area is concurrent with where Eastern Religions perceive the ‘Third Eye’. Religious experience can occur from stimulating the God spot in the brain.

Some researchers look specifically at the outcome when someone prays for the well-being of another.

Here is one recent study:

*Spiritual healers from around the world – including Jews leaving prayers at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Buddhists praying in monasteries in Nepal and France, Carmelite nuns in Baltimore offering prayers during vespers, and Moravians, Baptists and fundamental Christians praying during church – each simultaneously prayed for one of several designated groups in the study.*

*All of the groups did better than the standard care group, with those receiving distant prayers doing best.*

**These studies** are confirming that people are able to influence the health and well-being of people being prayed for, even across great distances, and even when those doing the praying do not know that people they are praying for them.

Numerous experiments involving prayer and distant healing have also been done involving animals and plants. One such study found that healers can increase the healing rate of wounds in mice.

*“Critics often complain that if you see positive results in humans it is because of positive thinking, or the placebo response,” said Dr. Larry Dossey, a retired internist in Santa Fe, N.M., and author of numerous books on spirituality and healing. “Microbes don’t think positively, and are not subject to the placebo response.”*

### **Swedenborg on Stage 6 of Regeneration**

When Swedenborg writes about the 6<sup>th</sup> stage of regeneration, he seems to describe a union with the Divine.

*Now the components of faith combine with those of love to make one entity. A marriage between spiritual and heavenly things has taken place. AC 60*

I am wondering if perhaps Swedenborg is seeing “meditation” as a state of oneness; union with the Divine. He sees this state as not just a passive one, but also an active one in the world.

This approach of Swedenborg’s appeals to me. I see prayer as extremely important in life. But, yet, to pray to God is to see God and me as a dualism. Praying utilizes the dualism, rather than making it disappear. Praying is the dualistic approach to God that has powerful effects on our own healing and that of others.



Swedenborg speaks of the regeneration process as leading us into oneness with the Divine, to the *Divine Human* or *God-man*.

It seems that most writers see prayer as a useful and important form of dualism that has powerful healing effects on others.

Yet, Swedenborg also sees as regeneration as increasingly moving beyond the dualism. I wonder if



“union” itself is a form of prayer. Perhaps it is a force for healing. Phineas Quimby said that he brought about healing by moving beyond dualism in his mind, and teaching others to do the same.

I invite you to explore this topic during this month. What are your experiences with prayer and meditation? Are they each an important and distinct part of our relationship with God? Can we use both states for healing ourselves, others, and the planet?

Our opening song was a beautiful Christian hymn about seeing Jesus in the garden as separate from me. This is a Zen meditation garden. How do you experience it?



## **Prayers & Fathers**

**June 19, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

#### **Psalm 46:1-11**

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.  
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.  
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.  
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.  
Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.  
"Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."  
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge

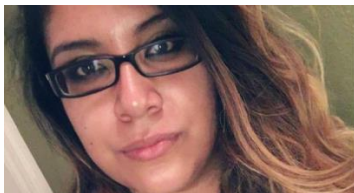
#### **From Swedenborg**

**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.

## **Message Prayers & Fathers**

This is a day we like to think of as a happy day, to honor father's. But today, let's take some time to remember fathers who were directly impacted by the events at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.



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One is the father of a 26-year-old woman who lost her life there. He is grief-stricken, but has decided to forgive the killer.

The Guardian said Monday that Guatemala-born Cesar Flores told reporters, "I forgive the murderer of my daughter, I cannot live with such great hatred." RawStory, David Ferguson, June 13, 2016.

Angel Castro gathered with other family members of victims last Sunday at Orlando Regional Medical Center. He said in an interview on NBC affiliate NCFW TV about his 26-year-old son: "I saw him and I hugged him ... he was hit in the leg, upper hip, and through the hand."

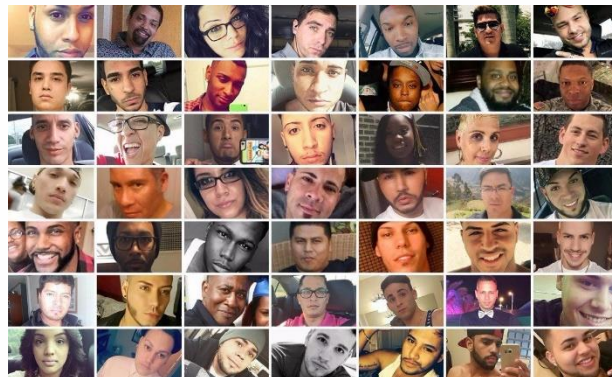
"God has given you another chance," Castro said he told his son.

Another father, Tom Sullivan, knew what fathers of Orlando victims were going through. He lost his son four years ago in the Aurora massacre – on his 27<sup>th</sup> birthday. His son was young and vibrant, just like so many of the victims in Orlando. Sullivan deals with his grief by taking action, like running for his state Senate.

"The parents are going to have to look around and see, you know, what a difference their sons or daughters made to other people's lives and they will get to hold on to that, that's what we get to hold on to," said Sullivan.

At least one father was a victim in the shooting. Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado, 35, was a dancer who worked at Disney Live and had a preschool-aged son.

One friend, Kyle Vest, wrote that Rosado had been "one of the best fathers I know, he would work multiple jobs and pass on hanging out with friends just to make an extra dollar for his son." Another friend, Eric Torres Santiago, wrote that "heaven has gained a talented salsa dancer who had a lot of dreams and aspirations." Romper, Katherine Dow.



What are religious responses to this tragedy? There are many ...

Last week, many Jews celebrated Shavuot – when Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai. Rabbi Menachm Creditor said

*However, just as the Israelites doubted God and formed the Golden Calf, Creditor railed against "the American proclivity for making an idol of a gun.*

*'I'm done composing prayers. We have to vote out of office anyone who votes with the NRA'*

*“I’m done composing prayers,” said the spiritual leader of Congregation Netivot Shalom in a late Monday night conversation after the end of Shavuot. Instead, he’s gearing up for a battle against the National Rifle Association, a 5 million-member nonprofit organization that advocates for gun rights.*

Since January, a group called Rabbis Against Gun Violence has grown to over 1,000 members, reported in The Times of Israel, June 16.

Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America wrote:

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.”  
Genesis 1:27*

*We are killing ourselves. We believe that all people are created in God’s image. All of humanity bears a family resemblance.  
Those murdered in Orlando were not abstract “others,” they are us.  
But somehow, in the mind of a deeply disturbed gunman, the LGBTQ community was severed from our common humanity. This separation led to the death of 49 and the wounding of 54 of us.  
We live in an increasingly divided and polarized society. Too often we sort ourselves into like-minded groups and sort others out.  
It is a short distance from division to demonization.  
Yesterday, we witnessed the tragic consequences of this.  
Our work begins now. We need to examine ourselves, individually and as a church, to acknowledge the ways we have divided and have been divided. We must stand with people who have been “othered”. We must speak peace and reconciliation into the cacophony of hatred and division. We must live the truth that all people are created in God’s image.  
“Today, we stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ community. Your grief is our grief. Your outrage is our outrage. We are all one family.”*

– Read more: [Statement of Muslim Advocates Executive Director Farhana Khera on Florida Nightclub Shooting](#)

This is a [response](#) from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley:

*“A voice is heard in Ramah,  
lamentation and bitter weeping.  
Rachel is weeping for her children;  
she refuses to be comforted for her children,  
because they are no more.”  
Jeremiah 31:15*

*The news of the shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando is simply devastating. We grieve the tragic loss of life and the devastation it brings to families and friends of the victims. Jeremiah’s painful words name the way this tragedy is felt in our very bodies and souls—a refusal to believe, to comprehend, even to seek comfort that cannot but feel shallow.  
The community at Pacific School of Religion and the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion express their deep grief to those most directly impacted, and grieve the fear that this act of violence will engender in our communities—particularly those marginalized and stereotyped by their gender identity and their faith tradition.*

Let us pray:

**Brand New Mourning**

by the Rev. Dr. Kwasi Kena

We never know what each new day will bring.  
We hope for joy and peace  
Or at least the comfort  
Of predictable routine.  
We're never prepared  
For the intrusion of  
Evil  
Acted out through  
Harm and mayhem.  
When  
death rips life  
From our grasp,  
When horror blurs  
Our sight,  
Have mercy on us, Lord.  
Hold our aching souls  
Guide us through  
Dizzying grief,  
Listen to our wailing ""Why?"  
Be the Comfort we may not even know we need  
As we live through this brand new mourning.  
Amen.  
-The Methodist Church



## **Prayer in Community**

**June 26, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Psalms 66**

*Leader: Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of his name. Give him glorious praise.*

**People: How awesome are your deeds, O God! Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you. All the earth worships you. They sing praises to your name!**

*Leader: Come and see what God has done. He is awesome in his deeds. We rejoice in God, who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations.*

**People: O God, you have tested us. You have tried us as silver is tried. We went through fire and water; yet you have brought us safely to a spacious place.**

*Leader: I cried aloud to God and extolled him. Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me.*

**People: If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly, God has heeded my prayers. He has not rejected my prayers or removed his steadfast love from me.**

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **Apocalypse Explained (Tansley) n. 529**

And I beheld, and I heard one angel flying in the midst of heaven.- That this signifies the Lord enlightening all in the heavens concerning the state of the church at its end, is evident from the signification of seeing and hearing, as denoting to open the understanding to perceive, concerning which we shall speak presently; and from the signification of angel, as denoting the Lord; that angels in the Word mean the Divine Truth proceeding from the Lord, thus the Lord Himself, as to Divine Truth, may be seen above (n. 130, 200, 302); here the Lord, as to revealing what the quality of the church would be in the last times as to the reception of the Divine Truth; and from the signification of flying, as denoting to enlighten and impart understanding, concerning which also we shall speak presently; and from the signification of "in the midst of heaven," as denoting in the whole heaven, or all who are in the heavens. That in the midst signifies in the whole, and thus all, may be seen above (n. 213). It is evident therefore, that, "I beheld, and I heard an angel flying in the midst of heaven," signifies the enlightenment of all in the heavens concerning the state of the church at its end. Illustration concerning the state of the church is signified, because this is the subject treated of in what follows. The reason why seeing and hearing signify the opening of the understanding to perceive, is, that to see signifies to understand, and to hear signifies to perceive. That to see signifies to understand, may be seen above (n. 260); and that to hear signifies to perceive, may also be seen above (n. 14, 108).



# Message

## Prayer in Community



Our annual Swedenborgian convention is starting this week! The worship theme this month at Swedenborgian Community online is “prayer,” so let’s reflect on prayer in the context of community.

I will be with our denominational community for a week, including the Council of Ministers’ meeting and Convention gathering. It is a unique experience to live with a community that has a focus on the spiritual growth of us all.

In our denomination’s Constitution, we define our purpose as:

*The Swedenborgian Church exists to help people be open to the Lord’s presence and leading, especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.*

Our annual Convention attends to the business of our denomination and provides opportunities for education and socializing. Yet at its heart is a framework of worship.

We open on Wednesday evening with a worship service developed by the year’s Convention sponsor. This year, that is General Council. Our on-line community is a ministry of General Council, so I have been invited to bring a prayer from our community, and I hope to share our caring and inclusive approach to prayer.

We usually have optional morning and evening prayers available each day for those of us attending. Many of the events – such as ordination – involve prayer from the community for the ordinands.



On Saturday, we will be dedicating a memorial to the late Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey. She was the first Swedenborgian woman to be ordained in any of our branches. She was my mentor as a minister, and I learned so much for her. I'm honored to have been asked to bring a prayer on Saturday to the dedication of a Memorial for Dorothea.

Just as the Convention opens with a worship service, it closes with one. And we are immersed in prayer in between. It provides a very different type of atmosphere than one finds, at say, a political convention like will take place this summer!

Making prayer central in a gathering changes its character – and experience of the event – profoundly.

St. Teresa of Avila experienced much prayer in her life as a Carmelite nun. She noted that most prayer was "vocal" -- often spoken out loud in church. In private, people often recited or read prayers; either out loud or in their heads. The Psalms and scripture were used frequently for prayer. Our scripture reading for today is Psalm 130; a deep and heartfelt prayer that has been read or recited for generations for prayer. It is used both in corporate worship as well as in private, personal prayer.

Teresa introduced us to the idea of a prayer beyond words. Prayer can grow out of simply being open to and living with God. In my daily life, I love to experience prayer this way.



Community prayers can also be private and personal -- yet shared with others. I'm reminded of retreats I have had at the Shalem Institute led by Tilden Edwards. We have been guided into a period of silence -- usually for 2 or 3 days. We are each deeply within our own relationship with God

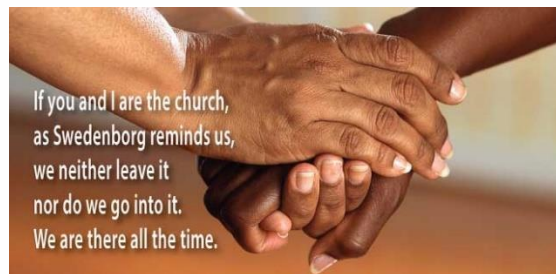


during this time. Yet we are also together. We start with community devotions together as we enter our silence. As silence begins, some of us go to the privacy of our rooms. Some stroll through the grounds or use the art materials together. Usually, I go to my room for awhile in complete privacy to find my connection with the Divine. Then, after some deep personal prayer, I notice that it is time for a meal. Quietly, I walk through the corridors to the cafeteria. As I walk, I pass others. We nod or smile. At first, I am startled. I have been immersed in private prayer, and now pass another person. My heart warms as I feel the companionship and support of another person during this time of personal prayer. I can pray alone AND with community simultaneously!

This coming week is a unique opportunity for prayer whether or not you are attending. Please pray for the people and events of the week. Join us through Blog Talk Radio.

Today, June 26<sup>th</sup>, I will be traveling to Urbana, OH, for our Convention and expect to be there this evening for our live prayer service. On Thursday, the 30<sup>th</sup>, we'll have live interviews with people at Convention, and you can call in through Blog Talk Radio.

You are invited to join in the spirit of the week through prayer – and Blog Talk Radio!



Let us pray: “Dear Divine Love and Wisdom, be with us in this special week, as our annual convention gathers in Urbana, OH. Provide a safe journey for those who are traveling. Bless the time of our convention; may we use it to open our hearts more deeply to each other and to You. Unite us in prayer -- those at the convention as well as all of our communities, scattered around the world. Make this a New Day in our relationships to each other and our commitment to You.

## Exploring Scripture Through the Arts

July 3, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

##### Exodus 15:20

*Then Miriam the prophetess ... took a tambourine in her hand, and all the other women followed her with tambourines and dancing.*

##### Luke 16:22-24 King James Version (KJV)

<sup>22</sup> *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*

<sup>23</sup> *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

<sup>24</sup> *And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

#### From Swedenborg

##### Arcana Coelestia 420 and 8339

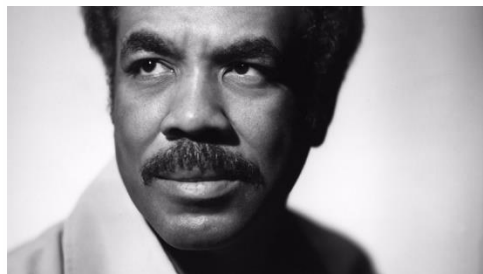
*Joyful feelings in the heart or interior things erupted into various activities in the body, such as singing and also dancing. Since in ancient times the glad feelings excelling all others were spiritual ones, that is, feelings springing from affections belonging to spiritual kinds of love, which were affections for goodness and truth, people were allowed, when they engaged in singing and musical harmony, to dance as well and so in dancing also to bear witness to their joy.*

## Message

### Exploring Scripture Through the Arts

This month we start our new worship theme for 2016-17: *The Year of the Word*. Here at SC.Org, we're going to have a particular focus on "The Power of the Holy Scripture as Experienced in the Arts."

There are so many ways that the arts have expressed the themes of scripture throughout history. [Alvin Ailey's](#) brilliant [American Dance Theatre](#) is one example.



Ailey was born in a small town in Texas in 1931 to a teen-aged mother. He grew up loving Black church services and local dance. He went to L.A. where he studied dance. He founded his own dance company in 1958. One of his most famous works was "Revelations" which was based on his

childhood in rural Texas and the Baptist Church. He performed internationally, sponsored by the State Dept. He died in 1989 of AIDS at age 58.

In “Revelations”, one can connect with the Gospels through the Black experience as expressed in the music and dance.

Swedenborg found the arts to be a profound way to express the messages in Scripture, as in the reading above about singing and dancing.

Many years ago, I encountered this dimension of Swedenborg’s theology in a dream. In this dream, I was again a faculty member in our seminary, the Swedenborg School of Religion. I was a new faculty member, and for the first time was involved in giving the senior students a comprehensive exam on Swedenborg’s theology. The first item on the exam was to pray. The students were scattered among several classrooms, and the faculty passed out written prayers to the students from various traditions. My task was to walk through the classrooms after a few minutes to see who was ready for the next part of the exam. I walked quietly, expecting to see students at their desks with bowed heads.



I was astounded at what I saw! The students were dancing and singing their prayers! Instead of taking the exam as individuals in isolation, the students in each room had formed a group. Each group had developed a different rhythm and melody and movements. All of the prayers were joyous and Spirit-filled. I was greatly uplifted as I saw these vibrant group prayers.

I suddenly realized that there never was anything else on the exam. If the students understood how to pray, then they had all they needed to know. If they realized that prayer could involve music and dancing, then they had grasped the essence of Swedenborg. Those students showed me, without words, what Swedenborg was all about.

I woke up stunned at the profound truth in my dream.

In this coming year, we’ll be exploring how the scriptural message has been expressed in painting, sculpture, pottery, music, dance – and all of the arts. We’ll come to know artists of the past – as well as the present. We’ll look at artists influenced by Swedenborg – esp. those right here in our own community at SC.Org.

## **The Art of Page Morahan**

**July 10, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible via Swedenborg**

#### **Apocalypse Revealed (Whitehead) n. 254**

[2] That "to create," in the Word, signifies to reform and regenerate, is plain from these passages:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a firm spirit in the midst of me (Ps. 51:10).  
Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good; Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit; they are created (Ps. 104:28, 30).

The people which shall be created shall praise Jah (Ps. 102:18).

Behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth, rejoice forever in that which I create; behold I create Jerusalem an exultation (Isa. 65:17-18).

Jehovah createth the heavens, He that stretcheth out the earth, He giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein (Isa. 42:5; 45:12, 18).

Thus saith Jehovah thy Creator, O Jacob, thy Former, O Israel; I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by My name; everyone that is called by My name, I have created him in My glory (Isa. 43:1, 7).

They were prepared in the day that thou wast created; thou was perfect in thy ways in the day that thou was created, until perversity was found in thee (Ezek. 28:13, 15).  
These things are concerning the king of Tyre, by whom are signified they who are in intelligence by the Divine truth.

That they may see, know, consider, and understand that the hand of Jehovah hath done this, and the Holy one of Israel hath created it (Isa. 41:20).

#### **Apocalypse Revealed (Rogers) n. 475**

*Who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it. This symbolically means, who animates all who are in heaven and the church, and enlivens each and every thing in them.*

*In the natural sense, to create means to create, but in the spiritual sense to create means, symbolically, to reform and regenerate (nos. 254, 290), which is also to enliven. Heaven means the heaven inhabited by angels. The earth and the sea symbolize the church? The earth those people who concern themselves with its internal elements, and the sea those people who concern themselves with its external ones (nos. 398, 470). The things that are in these symbolize each and every thing in such people.*



# Message

## The Artwork of Page Morahan

As we begin our year of “Scripture through the arts,” we are starting our “artist of the month” program, featured on our Facebook page.

Let’s start by considering how artists create their work.

Julia Cameron, author of [\*The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity\*](#) writes:

*Creativity is a spiritual force. The force that drives the green fuse through the flower, as Dylan Thomas defined his idea of the life force, is the same urge that drives us toward creation. There is a central will to create that is part of our human heritage and potential. Because creation is always an act of faith, and faith is a spiritual issue, so is creativity. As we strive for our highest selves, our spiritual selves, we cannot help but be more aware, more proactive, and more creative.*

William Blake wrote: *I myself do nothing. The Holy Spirit accomplishes all through me.*

How are creativity and spirituality connected? To Swedenborg, they were the same. *That "to create," in the Word, signifies to reform and regenerate.*

Dr. Page Morahan is our creative artist for this month. She has combined her creativity and spirituality throughout her life.

She has been part of our on-line Central Committee since 2009, serves as layperson to the Committee on Admission to Ministry, and is in the group exploring the Digital Presence of Convention. She has lived for the past 25 years in the Swedenborgian community in Bryn Athyn, PA, engaging in various spiritual groups. She is also a member of an activist Methodist church in Philadelphia in the Healing the Wounds of Racism and Conversations on Race group.

She has been instrumental in bringing the spiritual dimensions of the arts into our worship throughout her service on the Central Committee, and has been sharing with us her own spiritually-inspired art work.

Page is part of the [Orchard Artworks](#), a non-profit art cooperative in Bryn Athyn, PA, where they provide a supportive artist community and educate in the area about art and fine craft art. You can see her 2016 calendars at [this link](#).

Each of her cards, wall art or calendars is a unique piece – one-of-a-kind. She says, “I start with colored, patterned or textured paper that intrigues me - add my photographs, and perhaps fabric, paper, objects and quotations that fit the art and give an inspirational message.”

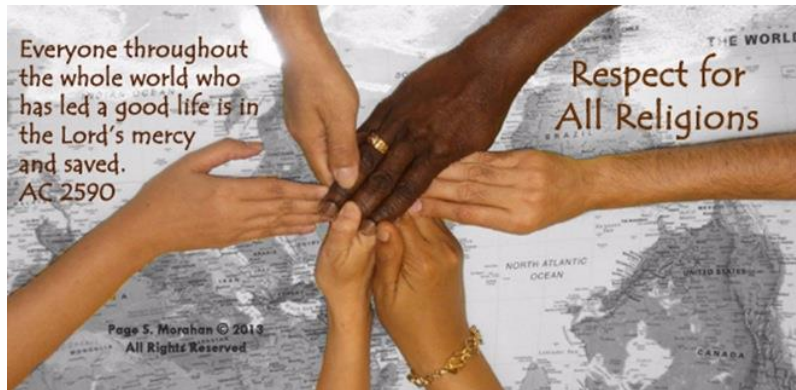
She is a semi-retired Professor Emerita, [Drexel University College of Medicine](#), and consults for leadership programs: [national program for women faculty and international program for faculty](#) in developing countries. These have fostered her interest in creating community among people located in many geographic sites, one of the attractions of Swedenborg!

Her art is presented in these categories:

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Website photos [rotating on our home page.]

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Images and quotes

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Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life





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E-Cards

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Card Series

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Flower Macros

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Let us pray.

Dear Lord of creation and creativity: Thank you for the blessing of a creative spirit; a spirituality that nurtures us to express the deepest within us.



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

## ***Artists in our Community***

***July 17, 2016***

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **From John 14**

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. 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....

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

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.

"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. 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. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **True Christianity 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.

##### **Heavenly Secrets 6190**

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.

## **Message Artists in Our Community**

We have an incredible amount of artistic expression right in our own on-line community. Many of our participants tell us that part of expressing their love of God involves the arts: music, poetry, dance, paintings, and many other forms.

During the coming year, we'll have an "artist of the month" each month, with their art featured on Facebook. Be sure to see this month's [Art of Page Morahan!](#)

Here are some of the people who have shared their art with us in the past:



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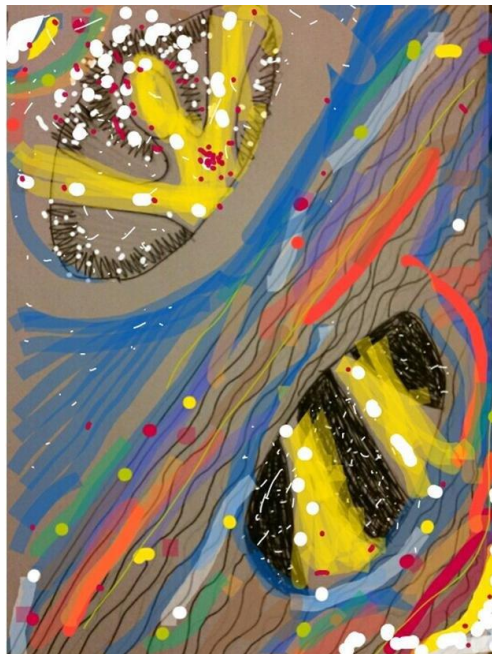
## Tamra Amato

Tamra tells us:

*I was raised Lutheran and my Norwegian grandparents were very strict and pushed the image of God being everywhere just waiting for you to slip up so he could toss you into the fires of hell.*

*Music, art, nature, Bible stories about Jesus and God's love is what "saved" me from what I now consider religious abuse. I felt the presence of God so intensely at times as a child... and I am so thankful because I didn't have words to describe it then but it was what kept me going. I had this "knowing" that we were all being held in a healing light...*

*I've been studying world religions since college and my spirit was on fire for learning after sobering up, so I sought out classes on every religion I could find. I would "take what I could use and left the rest." But Swedenborg has held my interest for a few decades now...*



*Lecto Divina for Joy, 2014*

Her son, Colin, has just received a Master's degree in counseling and is now starting at Pacific School of Religion towards Swedenborgian ministry. He says:

*Art... Of every kind has helped me... Michelangelo..... I was fortunate to go to France and Italy.... the cathedrals and churches had a profound effect on me....*



## D'Ann Loomis

D'Ann Loomis is a regular attendee for our on-line chats. She participates in playing music, singing, and painting.



*Stardance, 1998*



*Music*



*Sonata, 2002*



## Kathy Webb

Kathy Webb grew up on a farm in Iowa, and attended a country school.

She had limited exposure to art, but says:

*I loved food coloring. Once, when I was about 6 years old, I used the middle of celery as a tiny forest, and dropped different colors of food coloring on it to turn it into a magical forest and used it for a table center piece.*

*Next, I made a cake with white frosting and then dripped different food colorings all over it. Unfortunately, I used too much and when my family ate the cake, it dyed their lips all different colors!*

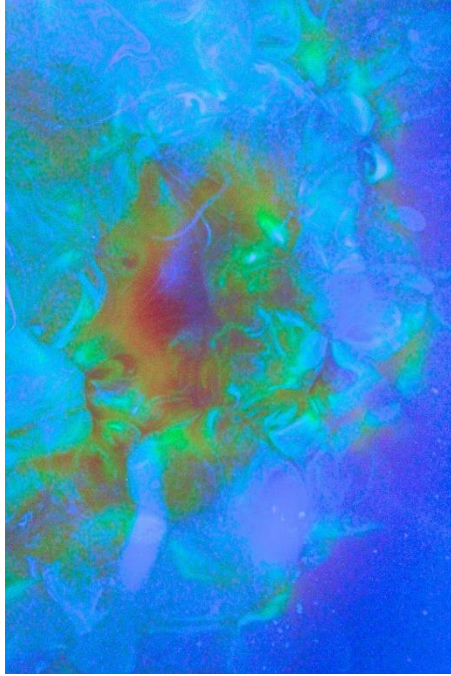
Kathy grew into a woman with deep spirituality, and she often expresses that spirituality through the arts.

One of her favorites is photography of colors and shapes. Her medium is often coffee and cream, or food coloring and India ink.

*Kathy says:*

*For me, I believe that God is in the process and in the end result.*







## Gillian Bedford

Gillian Bedford grew up in the General Church in Bryn Athyn, PA. She says that painting has always been a special time for her; a time of getting in touch with her feelings and to be aware of God's presence.

Gillian is one of the featured artists at [Orchard Art Works](#).

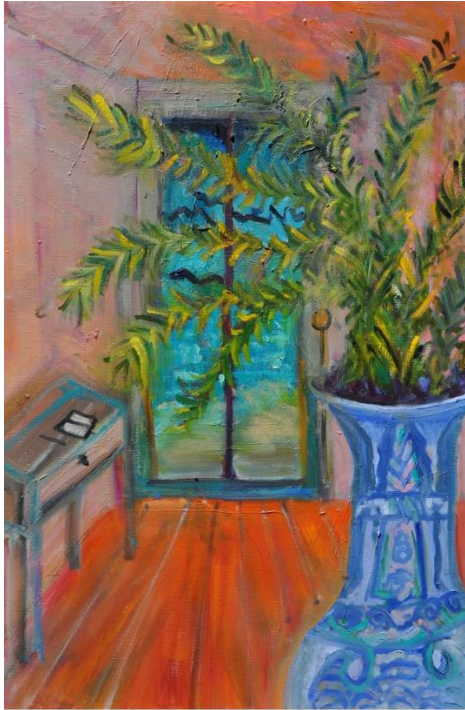


*Falling Leaves*



Swedenborgian  
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Love, Spirit, Life





*Van Gogh's Heaven*

Some of the people who have made their music available for our worship include: Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley, Elbert Smith, Rev. David Fekete, and Heidi Schnarr.

We'd love to include the creative ways that you connect with the Divine. To share any of your own artistic prayer, contact Rev. Wilma. [[Revwilma@swedenborgiancommunity.org](mailto:Revwilma@swedenborgiancommunity.org)]

Let us pray:

Dear Divine, help us to find You in music, nature, poetry, pottery, dance – and all of the many ways we can express our Love for You. Amen.

***Scripture Through the Hudson River Painters, Pt. 1***

***July 24, 2016***

**READINGS**

**From the Bible**

**John 14: 9-14**

Jesus answered, "I have been with you a long time now. Do you still not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. So why do you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you don't come from me, but the Father lives in me and does his own work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or believe because of the miracles I have done. I tell you the truth, whoever believes in me will do the same things that I do. Those who believe will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And if you ask for anything in my name, I will do it for you so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

**From Swedenborg**

**True Christianity 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, the earth is softened, and seeds sprout and bring forth fruit. Such is the parallelism between the spiritual things which are the environment of man's spirit, and the natural things which are the environment of his body.

**Message**

***Scripture through the Hudson River School of  
Painters***

***Pt 1: George Inness***





There are many paintings that give us messages from Scripture. Let's look for the scriptural inspiration in the work of Swedenborgian artist George Inness [1825-1894], who was one of the Hudson River School of painters.

He was born in the Hudson River town of Newburgh, New York, in 1825; the 5th of 13 children. His household included a Baptist, a Methodist, and a Universalist.

His father was a successful grocer, and Inness began work as a grocer's clerk when he was in his teens. He taught himself to paint, and began painting seriously in 1841 [age 16]. He had his first exhibition at the National Academy of Design four years later.

He became Swedenborgian in 1860 at the age of 35, when a fellow painter, William Page, introduced him to Swedenborg. From then on, he attempted to express Swedenborgian theology in his painting.

At the 1893 Chicago fair, Inness was the best-represented American, with fifteen paintings. He wanted to express the Swedenborgian concept of the presence of the Divine in the earth. He wrote:

*The paramount difficulty with the artist is to bring his intellect to submit to the fact that there is such a thing as the indefinable, God is always hidden, and beauty depends upon the unseen--the visible upon the invisible.*

He often stated he was not out to glorify nature, *but to express its hidden spirit and underlying character*. At the heart of this approach to painting was Inness's understanding of the aim of art, which was *not to instruct, not to edify, but to awaken an emotion*.



He wanted his paintings to show divine influx, and wrote:

*The intelligence to be conveyed by it [art] is not of an outer fact, but of an inner life. The greatness of art is not in the display of knowledge, or in material accuracy, but in the distinctness with which it conveys the impressions of a personal vital force, that acts spontaneously, without fear or hesitation.*

Inness termed his work "civilized landscapes" and tried to paint an integration of humanity and nature. He saw God as ever-changing, and wanted to express this concept in his paintings.

Because of this, he never saw his painting as "finished." As his son wrote:

*My father had the idea firmly established in his mind that a work of art from his brush always remained his property, and that he had the right to paint it over or change it at will, no matter where he found it or who had bought it, or what money he may have received for it. Wherever he found his pictures after they had left his studio he criticized, and would in most violent language declare the thing was "rot," that the sky was ...*

If the owner of the painting objected that he liked it just as it was, Inness would say,

*it makes no difference what you like; I say the thing is false.... And I want you to understand, sir that I claim the right to go into any house and change a work of mine when I am not satisfied with it, and see where I can improve it. And he said, "Do you think, because you have paid money for a picture of mine, that it belongs to you?"*

He also wrote:

*I have changed from the time I commenced [painting] because I had never completed my art and as I do not care about being a cake I shall remain dough subject to any impression which I am satisfied comes from the region of truth.*

Inness's devotion to Swedenborgian doctrine and his desire to find new ways of seeing the world, led to the creation of a new form of landscape painting. His innovative style and his studies in psychology and philosophy distinguish Inness from other American painters of his time; give his work a deeply spiritual quality.



Roberta Smith wrote in a New York Times article that *Inness wanted to show that paint has a nature all its own, and that God, or something close, was in the lack of details.* Ms. Smith added that *Inness's appreciation of paint as a vehicle for personal, complex emotional expression was years ahead of its time. His work has long been considered a precursor to the painterly, process-oriented art of Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning.* [The New York Times; Sept. 26, 2003].



As you look at his paintings, do you feel that you are experiencing any of the messages of scripture – esp. as we have it explained through the works of Swedenborg?

Let us pray.

Thank you, Lord for the many ways we can experience Your deep abiding love for each of us and for all of creation. We thank you for the paintings of George Inness, who has brought the scriptures alive for so many. Help us find ways to express Divine Love and Wisdom in our own lives through all that we do. Amen.

July 31, 2016

## READINGS

### From the Bible

#### **Luke 6: 1-9** (New International Version)

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

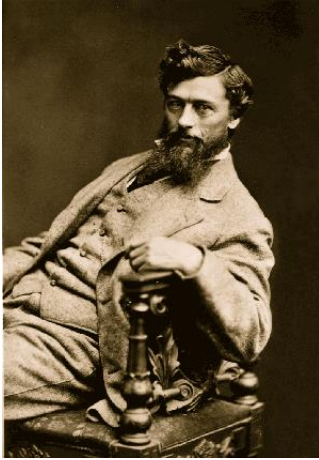
### From Swedenborg

#### **Arcana Coelestia (Elliott) n. 994: 2**

There are two kinds of pleasures - those of the will and those of the understanding. In general there are the pleasures of possessing land and wealth; the pleasures of positions of honor and those of service to the state; the pleasures of conjugal love, and of love of infants and children; the pleasures of friendship and of social intercourse; the pleasures of reading, writing, having knowledge, being wise, and many others. **Then there are the pleasures of the senses; such as that of hearing, which in general is the pleasure taken in the sweet sounds of music and song; that of seeing, which in general is the pleasure taken in various things of beauty**, which are manifold; that of smell, which is that taken in pleasant odors; that of taste, which is that taken in all the delicious and nourishing qualities of food and drink; and that of touch, which arises from further joyous sensations. Because these different kinds of pleasures are experienced in the body, they are called pleasures of the body. **But no pleasure ever arises in the body unless it arises from, and is sustained by, some interior affection.** Nor does any interior affection ever do so unless this in turn stems from a still more interior affection in which use and the end in view reside.

Message  
William Keith





Last week, we looked at the Swedenborgian-inspired art of George Inness, a Hudson River school artist.

Inness had been inspired in part by William Keith.

Keith was born in Scotland and then moved to New York in 1850 with his mother and sisters. In 1859 he moved to San Francisco, after going to school and learning engraving. He was an engraver while studying painting, and became well-known for his water-colors and oils.

He was introduced to naturalist John Muir by mutual friend Jeanne Carr. Keith and Muir became part of a supportive group of naturalists and painters.

Keith produced early landscapes of breathtaking views of the Sierras. Keith painted many of the landscapes that Muir wrote about. Keith was part of the Barbizon school of painting, that influenced George Inness and the Hudson River school.

*Like the Eastern painter George Inness, Keith became an [adherent to Swedenborgianism](#) and believed that his late, dark, indistinct works better suggested the spiritual reality that lay beyond the surface forms of nature.*

Muir and Keith made activist environmental trips in 1907 and 1909, for Muir's final environmental crusade to save the Hetch Hetchy Valley of California, now part of the Yosemite National Park, from being flooded to be a reservoir for San Francisco.





*Muir held up Keith's paintings of the valley during a plea before Congress, asking members to "preserve (the valley) in pure wildness for all time for the benefit of the entire nation." Keith was also one of the founders of the Sierra Club.*

One of Keith's best friends was Swedenborgian minister Rev. Joseph Worcester at the San Francisco Church and two of Keith's [murals hang in the San Francisco church](#).

Keith's wife Elizabeth died in 1882, and he turned to Worcester to help him through his grief. Rev. Worcester had a strong influence on Keith's approach to landscape painting. Wikipedia says:

*In 1883 Keith married Mary McHenry, who was the first female graduate of Hastings Law School and a leading suffragette. For their honeymoon, they went on a painting tour of the old California missions. A few months later they traveled to the East Coast and then to Munich, where Keith was determined to learn figure and portrait painting. He primarily worked on his own, occasionally receiving criticism from artists including Carl von Marr and J. Frank Currier. They returned to San Francisco in mid-1885.*

*Through Joseph Worcester, Keith met the architect Daniel Burnham in Chicago while en route to Europe. Burnham became an important patron and agent, showing and selling Keith paintings to collectors in the Chicago area.*

In 1886 the Keith's moved into a custom-built house in Berkeley, and he commuted to his art studio in San Francisco.





Murals by William Keith hang in the Swedenborgian Church in San Francisco.  
Photograph by Jim Karageorge

## ART HISTORY | CHARLES KEELER

[Art Matters, the online art magazine](#) says this:

*Of all his friends, the Rev. Joseph Worcester probably exercised the greatest personal influence over his life and work. Mr. Keith came of good old Scotch Presbyterian stock, but the mystic doctrines of Immanuel Swedenborg, as preached by Mr. Worcester, had quite obliterated the older faith. Indeed, Mr. Keith had grown too liberal for any creed, although he used to jokingly observe that his only chance of getting into heaven was by holding on to Mr. Worcester's coattails.*

It is fascinating to explore the interactions among artists and Swedenborgians. Rev. Joseph Worcester and the San Francisco Swedenborgian church were deeply involved in the art of their times. We'll continue to explore this fascinating story, and consider how the messages of Scripture – and of Swedenborg – have been and are expressed in the arts.

Let us pray:

Great Divine Artist, thank you for the many artists in our midst – now and in the past – who help us appreciate the messages of scripture in a new and deeper way. Help each of us to find our artistic self within to light our pathway and that of others. Amen.



***The Artist's Way***

**August 7, 2016**

**READINGS**

**From the Bible via Swedenborg**

**Apocalypse Revealed (Whitehead) n. 254: 2**

That "to create," in the Word, signifies to reform and regenerate, is plain from these passages:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a firm spirit in the midst of me (Ps. 51:10).

Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good; Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit; they are created (Ps. 104:28, 30).

The people which shall be created shall praise Jah (Ps. 102:18).

Behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth, rejoice for ever in that which I create; behold I create Jerusalem an exultation (Isa. 65:17-18).

Jehovah createth the heavens, He that stretcheth out the earth, He giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein (Isa. 42:5; 45:12, 18).

Thus saith Jehovah thy Creator, O Jacob, thy Former, O Israel; I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by My name; everyone that is called by My name, I have created him in My glory (Isa. 43:1, 7).

They were prepared in the day that thou wast created; thou wast perfect in thy ways in the day that thou wast created, until perversity was found in thee (Ezek. 28:13, 15).

These things are concerning the king of Tyre, by whom are signified they who are in intelligence by the Divine truth.

That they may see, know, consider, and understand that the hand of Jehovah hath done this, and the Holy one of Israel hath created it (Isa. 41:20).

**From Swedenborg**

**Apocalypse Revealed (Rogers) n. 475**

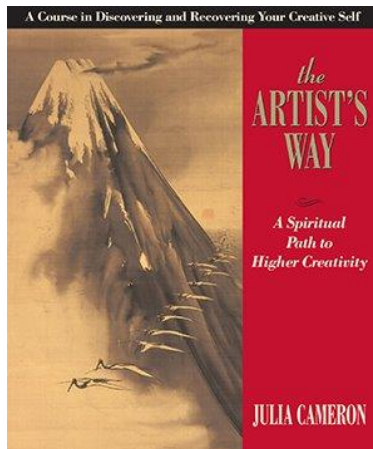
Who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it. This symbolically means, who animates all who are in heaven and the church, and enlivens each and every thing in them.

In the natural sense, to create means to create, but in the spiritual sense to create means, symbolically, to reform and regenerate (nos. 254, 290), which is also to enliven. Heaven means the heaven inhabited by angels. The earth and the sea symbolize the church? the earth those people who concern themselves with its internal elements, and the sea those people who concern themselves with its external ones (nos. 398, 470). The things that are in these symbolize each and every thing in such people.

**Message**  
**The Artist's Way & Swedenborg**



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life



Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* writes:

*Creativity is a spiritual force. The force that drives the green fuse through the flower, as Dylan Thomas defined his idea of the life force, is the same urge that drives us toward creation. There is a central will to create that is part of our human heritage and potential. Because creation is always an act of faith, and faith is a spiritual issue, so is creativity. As we strive for our highest selves, our spiritual selves, we cannot help but be more aware, more proactive, and more creative.*

William Blake wrote: *I myself do nothing. The Holy Spirit accomplishes all through me.*

How are creativity and spirituality connected? To Swedenborg, they were the same. *That "to create," in the Word, signifies to reform and regenerate.*

For Swedenborg, regeneration was a deeply spiritual process of a human being becoming one with the Divine.

In your life, how do the creative and the spiritual merge? Below is art work from D'Ann Loomis, one of the registrants on our web site. She writes about how the creative and the spiritual are connected for her:

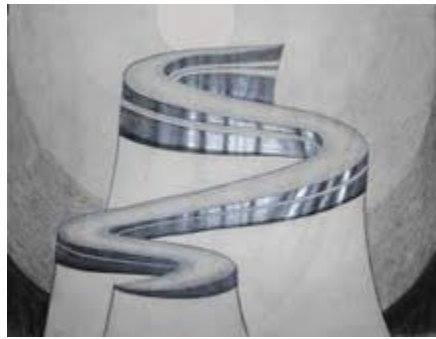
**D'Ann Loomis:**



***Music***, 1968, Tempera Painting

*I feel a desire to make a picture -- a drawing or a painting, of whatever I feel very taken with, either something I see in life, or in a photograph, or in my mind. As I become more involved in making the picture, I feel that I see more and more what is there for me to find and bring out in my portrayal of it.*

*I keep working with it until I cannot see any way to make it more like that, or when it seems to express those qualities as well as possible. Often the finished picture is quite different from what I originally had in mind when I began the work. Doing art work opens my awareness of what I see around me. Everything becomes more vivid and enjoyable to look at and I notice things I had passed by without really seeing. I go for long periods without doing art work. I have not done art work since January of this year, when my late husband fell so ill. Music is a great comfort to me, and I'm participating in several groups -- the church choir, local university civic orchestra, and a piano ensemble group. I was a professional violinist in my younger days.*



**Journey**, 1968, Pencil with Computer enhancement by son, Jerry



**Firebird**, 1968, Ink with Computer enhancement by son, Jerry

Julia Cameron offers what she sees as the Basic Principles of creativity. They are also the Basic Principles of spirituality:

1. *Creativity is the natural order of life. Life is energy: pure creative energy.*
2. *There is an underlying, in-dwelling creative force infusing all of life -- including ourselves.*
3. *When we open ourselves to our creativity, we open ourselves to the creator's creativity within us and our lives.*
4. *We are, ourselves, creations. And we, in turn, are meant to continue creativity by being creative ourselves.*
5. *Creativity is God's gift to us. Using our creativity is our gift back to God.*
6. *The refusal to be creative is self-will and is counter to our true nature.*
7. *When we open ourselves to exploring our creativity, we open ourselves to God: good orderly direction.*
8. *As we open our creative channel to the creator, many gentle but powerful changes are to be expected.*
9. *It is safe to open ourselves up to greater and greater creativity.*

10. *Our creative dreams and yearnings come from a divine source. As we move toward our dreams, we move toward our divinity.*

You'll notice that our opening song and our closing song both come from deep personal encounters with regeneration; and ended up being expressed in music and song.

Take some meditative time to consider your moments of deep encounters with the Divine. Did they inspire any creative expression in you? Consider your moments of creative inspiration. Did they feel like encounters with God?



## **Hildegard's Art**

**August 14, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

Isaiah 6:1-13

*In 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. Seraphs 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. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.*

*And 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!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The 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." Then 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

*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 Art**



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

## Hildegard: Her Life



Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1179), at age 42, was the abbess of a convent. She had been a resident since the age of eight, when her parents gave her (their 10th child), to the convent as their "tith" to the church. Despite her religious background, she resisted the call of God. It was a powerful call. She describes the experience:

*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.*

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.

Like Swedenborg, she received a dramatic call in middle age and was given new understanding of the scripture. Because of her willingness to respond to the call, she has enriched the world of spirituality. Many of her visions, or "Illuminations" were beautiful and complex paintings that contained spiritual meaning. Her music is deeply haunting. Let yourself become immersed in the experience of her illuminations and of her music.

## Hildegard: Her Illuminations



Hildegard's visions are called "illuminations". For Hildegard, it is the Holy Spirit who illumines. She compared her awakening to the experience of Pentecost.

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.

## Hildegard: Her Similarity To Swedenborg

Like Swedenborg, Hildegard had a vision that changed her life; she was given an understanding of the meaning of the Bible. She was told to write down everything she experienced during these mystical experiences.



*And it came to pass ... when I was 42 years and 7 months old, that the heavens were opened and a blinding light of exceptional brilliance flowed through my entire brain. And so it kindled my whole heart and breast like a flame, not burning but warming... and suddenly I understood of the meaning of expositions of the books...*



Swedenborg wrote about the importance of doing "uses". Hildegard's order, the Benedictines, "valued doing good labor". She started out as a nurse, and then illustrated books.

Like Swedenborg, Hildegard felt that her mystical experiences were given to her in order to be shared with others. She did not indulge herself in a "private" mysticism, but rather accepted a mission to educate others.

She valued science as well as mystical experience, and spent her life integrating both aspects of her being.

## Hildegard Center for the Arts



Hildegard Center for the Arts is located in Lincoln, Nebraska. Its mission is as follows:

*The mission of the **Hildegard Center for the Arts** is to provide a forum for all who seek to experience God through an appreciation of the visual and performing arts. **Hildegard** will provide opportunities for artistic expression, education and appreciation which will enrich our community and enhance humanity. It is the goal of Hildegard "to affirm that true beauty, which as a glimmer of the Spirit of God...opens the human soul to the sense of the eternal". \**

*\*John Paul II, Letter to Artists, 1999*

## Hildegard: Her Music

### Spiritui Sancto

Spiritui Sancto honor sit,  
qui in mente Ursule virginis  
virginalem turbam velut columbas collegit,  
Unde ipsa patriam suam  
sicut Abraham reliquit.  
et etiam propter amplexionem Agni  
desponsationem viri sibi abstraxit.  
Nam iste castissimus et aureus exercitus  
in virgineo crine mate transivit.  
O quis umquam talia audivit?  
Et etiam propter amplexionem Agni  
desponsationem viri sibi abstraxit.  
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.  
Et etiam propter amplexionem Agni  
desponsationem viri sibi abstraxit.

### Holy Spirit

Honor be to you, O Holy Spirit,  
who, through the mind of the virgin Ursula,

brought together a whirling tumult  
of the purest doves.  
Thereupon, like Abraham,  
she relinquished her homeland,  
and releasing herself from worldly betrothal,  
she entered into the embrace of the Lamb.  
So this pure golden army with flowing hair  
passed over the sea.  
O whoever heard of such as this?  
For she released herself  
from worldly betrothal,  
and entered into the embrace of the Lamb Himself.  
Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
She released herself from worldly betrothal,  
and entered in to the embrace  
of the Lamb Himself.

### Hildegard: Spiritual Inspiration

O Holy Wisdom, Soaring Power, encompass us with wings unfurled, and carry us, encircling all,  
above, below, and through the world.

--O Holy Spirit, Root of Life

Every element has a sound, an original sound from the order of God; all those sounds unite like the  
harmony from harps and zithers.

I, the fiery life of divine wisdom, I ignite the beauty of the plains, I sparkle the waters, I burn in the  
sun, and the moon, and the stars.

The earth which sustains humanity must not be injured, it must not be destroyed.

The soul is a breath of living spirit, that with excellent sensitivity, permeates the entire body to give it  
life. Just so, the breath of the air makes the earth fruitful. Thus the air is the soul of the earth,  
moistening it, greening it.

There is the Music of Heaven in all things and we have forgotten how to hear it until we sing.  
Underneath all the texts, all the sacred psalms and canticles, these watery varieties of sounds and  
silences, terrifying, mysterious, whirling and sometimes gestating and gentle must somehow be felt  
in the pulse, ebb, and flow of the music that sings in me. My new song must float like a feather on  
the breath of God.

When the words come, they are merely empty shells without the music. They live as they are sung,  
for the words are the body and the music the spirit.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, help us to recognize that you call each of us to a path of service with you. Help us to find  
our path, and to feel the joy that it imparts. Amen.



## **Gillian Bedford: Painting as Prayer, Part 1**

**August 21, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

#### **Psalm 54: 1-7, New International Version**

*Save me, O God, by your name;  
vindicate me by your might.  
Hear my prayer, O God;  
listen to the words of my mouth.  
Strangers are attacking me;  
ruthless men seek my life—  
men without regard for God.  
Selah  
Surely God is my help;  
the Lord is the one who sustains me.  
Let evil recoil on those who slander me;  
in your faithfulness destroy them.  
I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;  
I will praise your name, O LORD,  
for it is good.  
For he has delivered me from all my troubles,  
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.*

#### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Heaven and Hell (Dole) n. 185**

*I have seen palaces in heaven that were so splendid as to be beyond description. Their upper stories shone as though they were made of pure gold, and their lower ones as though they were made of precious gems. Each palace seemed more splendid than the last. It was the same inside. The rooms were graced with such lovely adornments that neither words nor the arts and sciences are adequate to describe them. On the side that faced south there were parklands where everything sparkled in the same way, here and there the leaves like silver and the fruits like gold, with the flowers in their beds making virtual rainbows with their colors. On the horizon of sight there were other palaces that framed the scene. The architecture of heaven is like this, so that you might call it the very essence of the art-and small wonder, since the art itself does come to us from heaven.*

*Angels tell me that things like this and countless others even more perfect are presented to their view by the Lord; but that such sights actually delight their minds more than their eyes because they see correspondences in the details, and through their correspondences they see things divine*

## **Message**

## **Gillian Bedford: Painting as Prayer**



Swedenborgian  
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Love, Spirit, Life



[Gillian Bedford](#) grew up in the General Church in Byrn Athyn, PA. She went to church every Sunday, and attended services in her home that her father conducted.

She has vivid memories of doing art with her mother. Her mother guided her into baking, making candles, drawing, and coloring. Gillian was grief-stricken as a teen-ager when her mother died.

Today Gillian is married to Allen Bedford and they have two grown daughters: Amara and Michelle.

Painting has always been a special time for Gillian; a time of getting in touch with her feelings and to be aware of God's presence. These paintings came from a year in which she was grieving loss. Through painting, she found spiritual pain, joy, and hope.

As she put paint to canvas, she found that deep feelings were released. She cried in grief over her mother's death during her teenage years, and her more recent father's. As she painted, she cried. And she healed. Painting brought her feelings of deep serenity, and a sense of awe in the majesty of the Divine. Painting has become for her a time to worship and to pray. She emerges from her painting time feeling uplifted and connected to God.

Gillian would like to share with us the spiritual journey of a year of healing through her paintings. Below, are the 11 paintings of this journey, in sequential order. Gillian provides some words to guide our understanding of her process. She invites us into a sacred space beyond words to join her on this journey.

The paintings and the words of "Gillian's Journey" are all Gillian's own.

## Gillian's Journey

*The first three paintings are a triptych of leaves. In the first two paintings, set in early and late fall, the leaves resemble a couple dancing. As they fall through the sky the dead brown oak leaf reaches out to the lively green one.*



Falling Leaves

*In "Leaves," the second of the series, the sky is a reddish black color, there are glowing streetlights, and the moon is in the background. The earth boasts of tilled rolling hills.*



Leaves

*The third is set in early winter, here; the leaves are covered with sleet.*

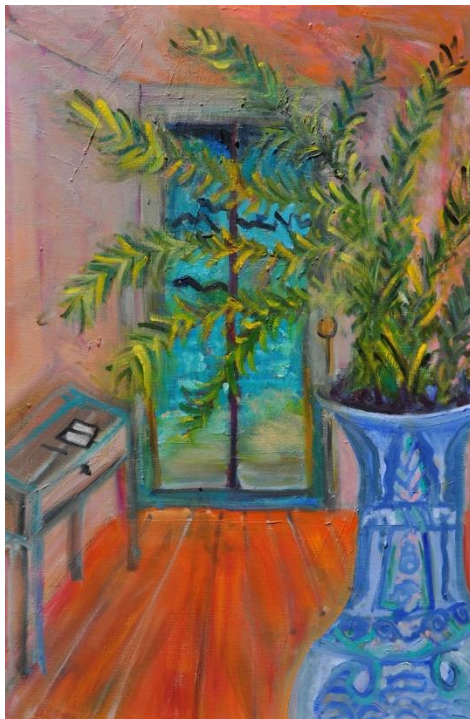




Gone

*The final painting of the triptych, "Gone," is about the experience of losing a loved one; the family members are standing above as the form disintegrates onto the earth. There are green stones for remembrance around the brown fallen leaf. Even though the sky has blues and there are spirited colors in the background, there is much pain in the subject.*

*During the painting process, I rhythmically scraped into the paint while it was still wet, with my thumbnail, to achieve the effect of gritty loss.*



Van Gogh's Heaven

*In "Van Gogh's Heaven" I was thinking of Van Gogh's struggles, waking up in an intermediary place before heaven, and about the visionary, Emanuel Swedenborg, writing of Van Gogh's experience. The room is apricot colored, and the glass door looks out onto a warm, tropical scene. Van Gogh's "crows",*

*the crows he painted before he took his life, can be seen through the glass doors. They represent working through life's difficulties before moving to heaven. The colors are bright and encouraging. The floorboards hearken back to Van Gogh's paintings.*

*This painting is the first of the series in this collection about windows to eternity.*



Monet's Heaven

*In "Monet's Heaven" the window represents earthly attachments opening up to Monet's wild poppy dreamland, this signifies the transition from life on earth to heaven. The right windowpane opens up and begins to dissolve into the garden. I used large brushes with thin layers of paint to create movement and give the feel of wispy transitions. The poppies on the hillside are painted with thicker paint and smaller strokes that have rhythm and joyful bright color. This painting was also influenced by Matisse's window paintings.*



New Playful World

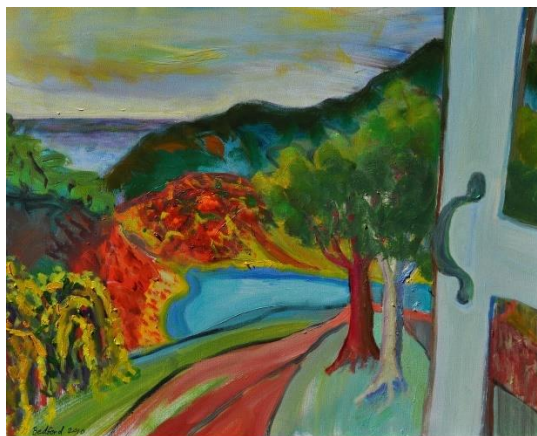
*"New Playful World" describes a person moving emotionally from a restrained life on earth to a more lighthearted one. In this painting I was influenced by Fairfield Porter's playful color filled landscapes. I sought to paint a story of a person who moves from a dark world to a lighthearted spiritual world. The*

*trees are talking to each other joyfully, and the sky echoes the foreground*



**New Life**

*In “New Life,” the windowpane acts as a transition from this life crossing over to the next. The scene through the window has multiple perspectives from looking downward onto foamy water to looking outward, across a lake at two volcanic mountains. The mountains symbolize eternal married partners. In this painting the window frame shows resistance to moving over, yet the water and mountains are alive and encouraging.*

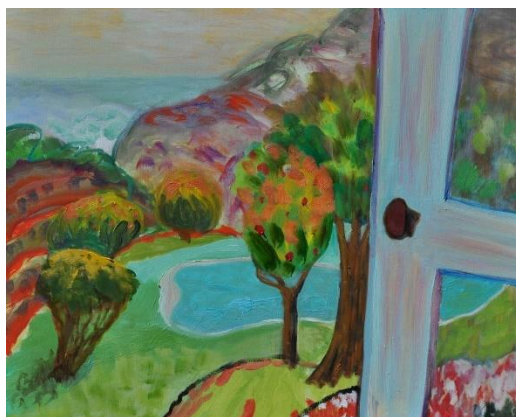


**Hockney's Heaven**

*“Hockney’s Heaven” is full of brilliant colors and leads the eye to two trees representing two eternal married partners. There is a reddish path that leads behind the trees, beyond the pool and back into the landscape. The red and whitish trees represent the marriage of good and truth. The ocean in the*

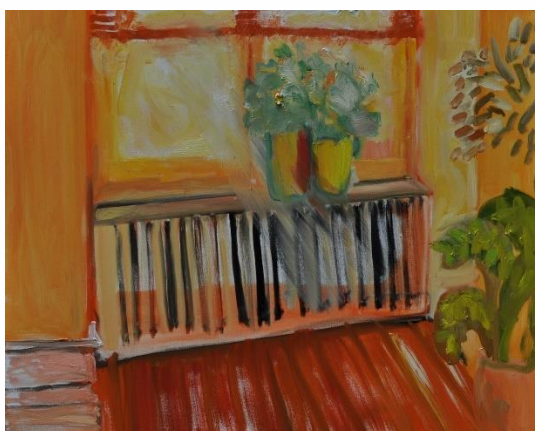


*background is the Pacific. I was influenced by David Hockney, a colorful California painter, and by my family camping trips in California where we saw beautiful scenic areas.*



*Child's Play*

*“Child’s Play” is similar to “Hockney’s Heaven” but is about a grouping of childlike friends, which are the bushes and trees, all enjoying life together.*



*Celestial Heaven*

*“Celestial Heaven” is about the highest love because it is of God’s love and light pouring inwards on two pots. The pots are symbolic of two married people in the highest heaven, receiving the Lord’s ever-present love and wisdom. It evolved out of the other paintings as a way to describe an immediate feeling of God wrapping us in warmth.*



*Becoming*

*And finally, "Becoming" describes me thinking of waking up in heaven, to my favorite spot of peace in my house, my deck. There I am looking out at my favorite old apple tree, which my father planted on the property as a sapling many years ago. It is called "Becoming" because it moves from rigid branches to sweeping, lively branches peering out the other side of the deck's beams.*

*Painting this series of works has taken me on a journey through loss, survival, hope, pain and joy.*

## Reflection

What is your experience of walking through this regeneration journey with Gillian? As you look at the paintings, can you feel the sacred space that she was in when she painted them? Can they be, for you, a form of prayer?



## ***William Blake: Painting as Prayer***

**August 28, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Revelation 12: 1-6**

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter." And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **Apocalypse Explained (Whitehead) n. 712, Verses 3, 4**

And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them unto the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, that when she brought forth he might devour her offspring. "And there was seen another sign in heaven," signifies Divine revelation respecting the attack upon the doctrine that is for the New Church, and by whom (n. 713); "and behold, a great red dragon," signifies all who are merely natural and sensual from the love of self and of the world, and yet have more or less knowledge from the Word, from doctrine therefrom, and from preaching, and think to be saved by knowledge [scientia] alone apart from life (n. 714); "having seven heads," signifies the knowledge [scientia] of the holy things of the Word, which they have adulterated (n. 715); "and ten horns," signifies much power (n. 716); "and upon his heads seven diadems," signifies Divine truths in the ultimate of order, which are the truths of the sense of the letter of the Word adulterated and profaned (n. 717). "And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven," signifies the falsification and adulteration of all the truths of the Word (n. 718, 719); "and cast them unto the earth," signifies their extinction and destruction (n. 720); "and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth," signifies the hatred of those who are meant by the "dragon" against the church with those who will be in the doctrine and thence in the life of love and charity from the Lord (n. 721); "that when she brought forth he might devour her offspring," signifies that they might destroy the doctrine of that church at its first rise (n. 722).

## **Message**

### **William Blake: Painting as Prayer**





It was April 14, 1789, and an historic event was taking place in London: the First General Conference of the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church. A flyer had been passed around inviting all *the readers of the Theological Writings of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg, who are desirous of rejecting, and separating themselves from, the Old Church, or the present Established Churches.*

The conference came up with 42 propositions for separating from the established churches. Two of the attenders who signed were William Blake and his wife Catherine.

We don't know for sure when Blake became interested in Swedenborg, but scholars think it was around 1787, but their signing the conference book April 14-17 in 1789 is the first time we know he was interested in Swedenborgian ideas. [Paley, p. 16].

Paley says:

In Blake's works of the late 1780's and early 1790's, the effects of Swedenborg's doctrines can only be described as pervasive... Blake freely borrowed from Swedenborg's system of correspondences, adapting it to the purposes of his own poetry. [p.18].

In 1809 Blake had a catalogue of 16 pictures he put on exhibition. One was "The Spiritual Preceptor: an Experimental Picture." It was based on Swedenborg's Memorable Relations in *True Christianity* #623. Sadly, that painting has been lost.

Between 1805 and 1810, Blake received a commission to create over 100 water color paintings that would illustrate books of the Bible. Four of these paintings were inspired by The Great Red Dragon in Revelation. As our focus this year is on art depicting messages from scripture, these works of Blake's seem especially relevant for us to look at.

The first one is featured on the website of the [National Gallery of Art](#).



The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun- William Blake - 1805

They say this about it:

*A cosmic battle between good and evil unfolds in this dramatic watercolor by romantic poet and visionary artist William Blake. Sweeping lines cross the drawing and evoke the zigzag flash of lightning, whoosh of a gale, and flap of wings, imbuing the scene with tension. The stakes are no less than the fate of humankind.*

Look closely at the painting as you read again the lines of scripture that opened our worship:

*A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. - Revelation 1-6*

Does the painting give you a deeper insight into the passage that just the words do? For me, it certainly does. In reading the passage, it's hard to picture it. But looking at the painting brings it to life – as this woman is about to give birth and a red dragon awaits to devour the child! Then God snatches the child up to his throne, and prepares a safe place for the woman in the wilderness. Whew!



The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun- William Blake - 1803-1805

Then we go to yet another level of meaning by looking at how Swedenborg explains the passage.

We see that it gives us an understanding of the New Church:

"And there was seen another sign in heaven," signifies Divine revelation respecting the attack upon the doctrine that is for the New Church. The dragon signifies intellectual learning in the church – those 7 heads – but yet not having compassion. He goes on in additional passages talking about the 7 heads as people who know doctrine with their heads, and perhaps falsely believe that one is saved by faith alone. In reality, we need to live loving actions in the world.

Swedenborg continues to explain the inner meaning of the dragon and the woman in further passages. He gives us an understanding of the difference between the New Church and the doctrines generally taught in the Christian Church – esp. of his day.



The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea - William Blake - 1805

So, Swedenborg gives us a deeper understanding of the passage. Now, take that understanding to the painting – and let the painting speak to you.

The painting can give us an understanding beyond words. We may each receive something different from it. By sharing our differing perceptions, we can all learn yet more from the painting.

We are starting to see some of the ways that painting can give us the messages of scripture.





The Number of the Beast is 666 - William Blake - 1800-1810

Let's pray: "Dear Divine, help us learn more about your Wisdom and Love through the many works of art in which Your messages shine through. Help us share Your messages with others – through actions and through art.

Resources cited:

[Morton Paley, "A New Heaven is Begun": Blake and Swedenborgianism" in: *Blake and Swedenborg: Opposition is True Friendship: The Sources of William Blake's Arts in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, Compiled and Edited by Harvey F. Bellin and Darrell Ruhl [New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc.], 1985.

[Robert Rix, "William Blake and the Radical Swedenborgians"](#)



## ***William Blake: Mystical Visions***

***September 4, 2016***

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

#### **I Corinthians 15: 58**

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

#### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 7081**

The very life of man is his love; and such as his love is, such is his life; nay, such is the whole man. But it is the ruling or reigning love, that is, the love of that which he has as the end, which makes the man. This love has subordinate to itself many particular and singular loves, which are derivations, and appear under a different shape; but still the ruling love is in each one of them, and directs them, and through them, as through mediate ends, looks to and aims at its end, which is the first and last of them all; and this both directly and indirectly.

## **Message** **William Blake: Mystical Visions**

Happy Labor Day Weekend!

This weekend is often seen as “the last hurrah of summer” – a chance to enjoy a long weekend. It also has a long history. 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.

It’s also a time to reflect on the things we do with the days in our lives.

Swedenborg wrote about our “ruling loves”, those deepest loves within ourselves. When we are doing the things that makes us truly happy, we are doing God’s work. This is the work we will do in the afterlife.

We can’t always do what we most love every day; but we need to find some time for these loves.



For many, the deepest loves involve the arts.



One person whose ruling love seemed to involve the arts was William Blake.

We looked at Blake [LAST WEEK](#). This week, let's continue.

Blake was born in London in 1757, the same year as the Last Judgement took place in the spiritual realms, according to Swedenborg.

Some researchers think that his parents were Swedenborgians or readers of Swedenborg, but that hasn't been confirmed.

Blake' and Swedenborg's lives overlapped, with Swedenborg passing in 1772, when Blake was 15.

They were both influenced by the Enlightenment and the tensions between science and religion. Some have spoken of the Mystical Enlightenment as:

*“various mixtures of Romanticism, the new prowess of the natural sciences, kabbalah, occultist theories, and numerous versions of Christian mysticism.”*

*-William Blake: Glances on His Engagement with the Theosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg* by Francesca M. McCrossan, PhD, and Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence, August 2007

Blake was especially fascinated by Swedenborg's mystical experiences. When he was 8, William told his parents that he saw a tree filled with angels. He had many more such experiences throughout his life.

Blake studied at a drawing school in London and became an apprentice to James Basire, an engraver who read Swedenborg and we know that Blake delved into the mystic's writings.

Much of Blake's art came from things he saw in his mystical experiences. He claimed that his brother, after death, came to him every night to help him develop a type of printing.



Jerusalem, c 1804

Philip Coppins writes that:

*None of the scenes in Blake's art show landscapes as we know it. All his backgrounds are "eternal", like darkness, or stars. Blake the painter does not do shepherds in a landscape or baby Jesus. Instead, he tackles subjects such as "the ghost of a flea", or a portrait of Newton.*

*"Ghost of a Flea" was the result of his vision of a flea and its statement that human souls sometimes resided in fleas, as a punishment for past lives. One friend was there when Blake had a second vision of the flea, at which point he would sketch him in more detail: "here he is – reach me my things – I shall keep my eye on him. There he comes! His eager tongue whisking out of his mouth, a cup in his hands to hold blood and covered with scaly skin of gold and green."*

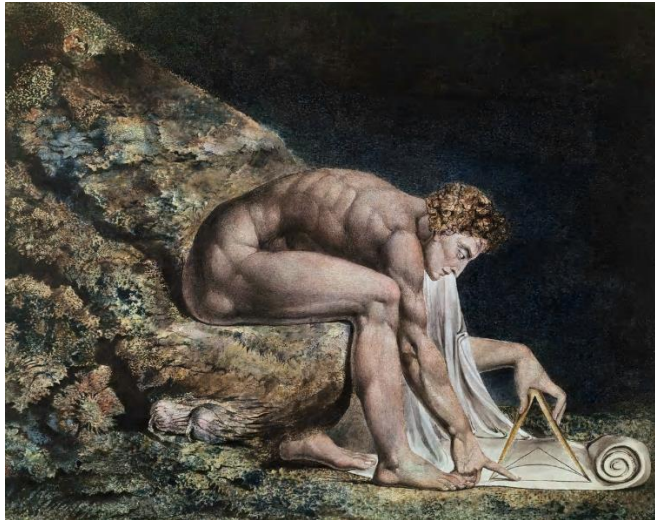
*-Philip Coppins, "William Blake: What paintings of Visions come"*





The Ghost of a Flea, c 1819-20

Newton may have been one of his most famous paintings:

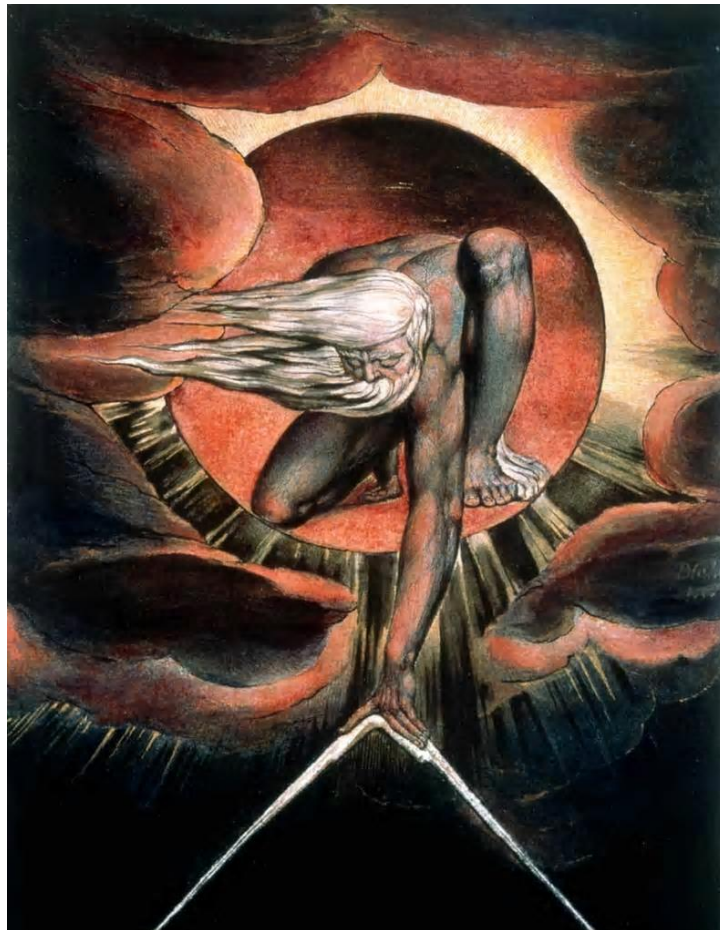


Newton, c 1795-1805



Eduardo Paolozzi's vast 1995 bronze sculpture, inspired by Blake, stands in front of the British Library.

Newton is depicted in a way that shows Blake's distrust with the science of his day. He was interested in an approach that today we would call Quantum Physics.



The Ancient of Days, c 1794

You can see his 10 most famous paintings [here](#).

Blake's death has some similarity to Swedenborg's. On Aug. 12, 1827 at 6 PM, he told his wife that he would always be with her, and then he passed. A lodger in the house at the time said:

"I have been at the death, not of a man, but of a blessed angel."



The Angels Hovering Over the Body of Christ, c 1805

On this Labor Day Weekend, enjoy a rest from your usual labors, and consider spending some time with William Blake's art. And allow his art to inspire your own creativity.

Let us pray.

Dear Creator:

Thank you for the gift of creativity, especially as it was expressed in the life of William Blake. Guide us each to our own creative center where our deepest loves live. Help us find ways to express these loves in the world. This weekend help us remember those who are looking for work or in unhappy work environments. Amen

**William Page**

**September 11, 2016**

## READINGS

### From the Bible

#### From Psalm 51

<sup>10</sup> Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

<sup>11</sup> Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

### From Swedenborg

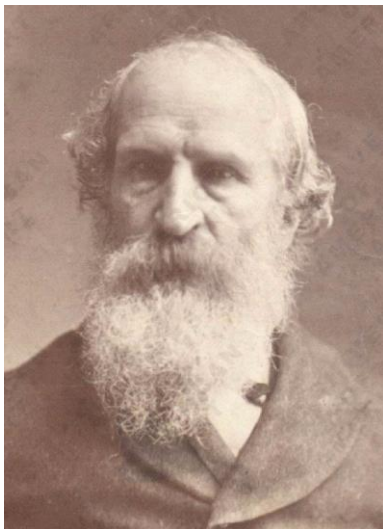
#### Apocalypse Revealed (Rogers) n. 475

*Who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it. This symbolically means, who animates all who are in heaven and the church, and enlivens each and every thing in them.*

*In the natural sense, to create means to create, but in the spiritual sense to create means, symbolically, to reform and regenerate (nos. 254, 290), which is also to enliven. Heaven means the heaven inhabited by angels. The earth and the sea symbolize the church? the earth those people who concern themselves with its internal elements, and the sea those people who concern themselves with its external ones (nos. 398, 470). The things that are in these symbolize each and every thing in such people.*

## Message William Page

### HIS LIFE



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

William Page was born in 1811 in Albany, N.Y. and died Oct. 1, 1885 in Tottenville, Staten Island, N.Y. He was talented in painting as a child, but had his heart set on becoming a Presbyterian minister. He studied at Andover and Amherst, before returning to painting. He was especially well-known for his portrait paintings, and he painted many famous people, including John Quincy Adams and Robert and Elizabeth Browning.

In 1833, he married Lavinia Tibill and they had three daughters. By the 1840's he was becoming known as a painter, but his wife left him in 1840. He remarried in 1843. In 1844, he had a series of articles published on "The Art of the Use of Color in Imitation in Painting."

In 1850, he traveled to Florence where he made copies of the works of Titian, studying the use of color. He lived in Italy for 11 years where he became friends with the sculptor Hiram Powers. Powers told him about Swedenborg. In Florence, he attended a New Church group with Powers and the Browning's.

In 1854, his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife left him in the middle of scandal, and he went into debt. Two years later, he met and married Sophia Stevens Hitchcock, a widow from Vermont traveling in Rome.

In 1860, he returned to the U.S. with his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife and moved to Tottenville, New York. They had 6 children. Page had a studio in New Jersey and later Manhattan. He lectured on Titian and Venetian art, and about his ideas about nature, art, and spirituality.

In 1877, he collapsed and was disabled the rest of his life. He died in 1885.

## HIS ART



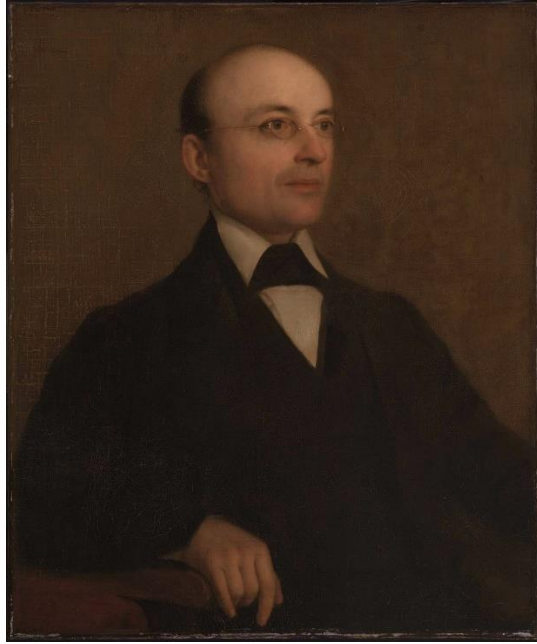


William Page Self-Portrait



Mrs. William Page



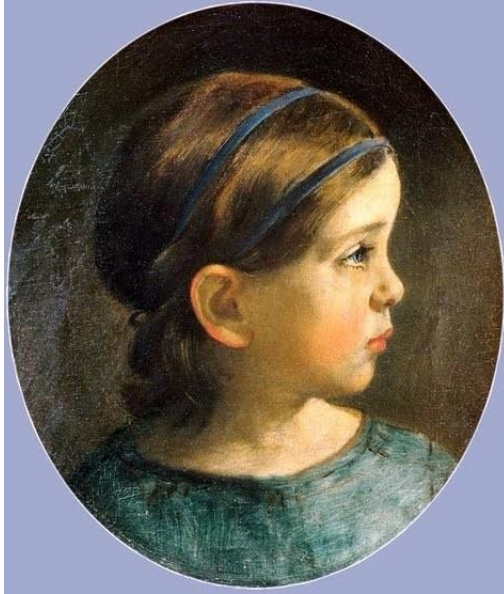


William Lloyd Garrison, 1844-47



Senator Charles Sumner, 1874





Mary Page, daughter of the artist



Charlotte Cushman, 1853





Moses, Aaron and Hur on Mount Horeb-1857



Venus Guiding Eneas and the Trojans to the Latin Shore-1862



What do you see in his artwork?

Do you see any Swedenborgian influence in his work?

**Let us pray.**

Dear Creator, thank you for the blessing of William Page on this earth. May we be inspired by his creativity. Help us each to find and share our own creative selves.



**Ralph Albert Blakelock**

**September 18, 2016**

## READINGS

### From the Bible

#### **Matthew 25:34-45 (New International Version)**

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

### From Swedenborg

#### **New Jerusalem and Heavenly Doctrine (Chadwick) n. 90**

This too the Lord teaches in Matthew; for He said to those in a state of good that they had given Him food, they had given Him drink, given Him hospitality, clothed Him, visited Him and come to Him in prison; and then that so far as they had done these things to the least of His brothers, they had done it to Him (Matt. 25:34-40). Those six good deeds understood in the spiritual sense comprise all the different kinds of neighbour. It is also plain from this that when good is loved, the Lord is loved; for it is the Lord who is the source of good, who is in a state of good and who is goodness itself.

## Message Ralph Albert Blakelock



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Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life



Glyn Vincent has written a definitive biography of Ralph Albert Blakelock entitled *The Unknown Night: The Genius and Madness of R.A. Blakelock, an American Painter* published by Grove/Atlantic, Inc. Most of the following quotes are from this book.

The website Artsy states that:

*With the exception of James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Albert Pinkham Ryder, no American [Tonalist](#) was more crucial to the development of American modernism than Ralph Albert Blakelock. Although he started out as a somewhat conventional [Hudson River School](#) painter, his poetic and symbolic moonlights of the 1890s, with their emphasis on pattern and abstract design and manipulated paint surfaces, changed the face of American art.*

Ralph Blakelock was born in New York City on October 15, 1847. His father was a homeopathic physician. Glyn Vincent says that ...

*Blakelock's interest in Emanuel Swedenborg's mystic writings began when he was a young man. Though Dr. Blakelock was not a Swedenborgian, many of his fellow homeopathic doctors were and the homeopathic books and journals that his son saw in his home were littered with Swedenborgian and transcendentalist thought.*

Ralph initially tried to follow in his father's footsteps. In 1864 he started classes at the Free Academy of the City of New York, now the City College of New York. But he was miserable, just wanting to paint. He dropped out, and traveled west, spending time with Native Americans. He learned a lot from them about color, and he kept a notebook of sketches.

In 1877 he married Cora Rebecca Bailey, and they had a son born the same year. Ralph was always struggling to support his family. He sold his paintings for almost nothing. He became discouraged and depressed, showing signs of mental illness.

His early paintings were landscapes that were inspired by the Hudson School.

He was friends with the painter Inness.

*Both Blakelock and Inness had studios in the University Building on Washington Square in the early 1880s and both moved to New Jersey— within a few miles or so of each other— about 1879. They were both Swedenborgians.*

Glyn writes about how spiritualist ideas influenced both Blakelock and Inness:

...spiritualist ideas about the reality of another, unseen world certainly conformed with their Swedenborgian views, and with their artistic concerns on the mystical junction between the infinite and finite, the soul and nature, dreams and the material world. On a political level, the popular escapist appeal of spiritualism, with its close ties to transcendentalist and Swedenborgian thought, brought artists like Blakelock and Inness together with others disaffected by the tide of materialism, industrialization, and militarism sweeping the country. They were searching for an alternate reality, a counterculture. And inasmuch as they were trying to express the immaterial reality of a landscape, what Inness described as “the indefinite” and its passionate, symbolic relation to the soul, they were probing a more complex and modern conception of human consciousness. Expressive American painters like Blakelock and Inness, as well as Dewey, Alexander Wyant, Murphy ...

In 1880 the family moved to E Orange NJ where 4 more children were born. Ralph became quite active in the Swedenborgian church there.

*Orange citizens organized groups for the emancipation of women, temperance, Indians' rights, and the prevention of cruelty to animals; they even set up an anti-cursing society. The Swedenborgians— Blakelock later became a church officer— published a philosophical broadsheet and gathered every Tuesday evening in a musty room they rented above Main Street to discuss such esoteric topics as “The Relations of the Temporal Things which are Seen to the Eternal Things which are not Seen.”*

Gyn suggests that Blakelock was again drawn to Swedenborg as his mental illness got worse.

*Blakelock's reimmersion into Swedenborgianism came at a time when he was in a reflective mood and might well have been experiencing his first “peaks”— experiences of heightened awareness— which often precede schizophrenic illness. It was in 1889 that Blakelock wrote his only known work on art, *Measure and Weight: On the Art of Painting*. The manuscript and all of Blakelock's writings have been lost (all that remains of the manuscript is the title page ...*

In 1890, he had his first mental breakdown. He had delusions and other symptoms of schizophrenia. He was convinced that he was wealthy

*In these lean and difficult times, Blakelock increasingly turned for solace to the small Swedenborg community in East Orange. The Swedenborgians in town were led by Reverend Charles H. Mann, a controversial figure within the church who, for twenty-five years, was editor of a weekly journal called the *New-Jerusalem Messenger*. The Swedenborgian orthodoxy criticized the *Messenger* for being too “philosophical and metaphysical for the average man,” but it was Mann's “attitude of warm support toward the woman's movement, socialistic tendencies, and . . . strong anti-ecclesiastical sentiment” that most irked the church authorities and eventually drove him from the church.*

In 1899, he had a severe breakdown he spent most of the rest of his life in institutions.

Soon after going into the hospital, his paintings began to go up significantly in value – some selling for several thousand dollars. He had few supplies in the hospital, but he found ways to continue painting until his death at age 71.

He was also a musician, and often wrote piano works that inspired his paintings.

Swedenborg was an important inspiration to him. Gyn says:



*After a few years as the son of a homeopathic physician, Blakelock would have been familiar with many of Swedenborg's basic tenets. .... In the years that followed, however, as Blakelock's art became increasingly abstract and philosophical, Blakelock, like Whitman, William Blake, William James, George Inness, and William Page, found that Swedenborg's equation of material and spiritual reality had a resonance with his own work that he could not quite shake off. Blakelock's experiences with Native Americans further spurred his interest in Swedenborg's ideas and, by the 1870s, he was intimately acquainted with spiritual circles in New York.*

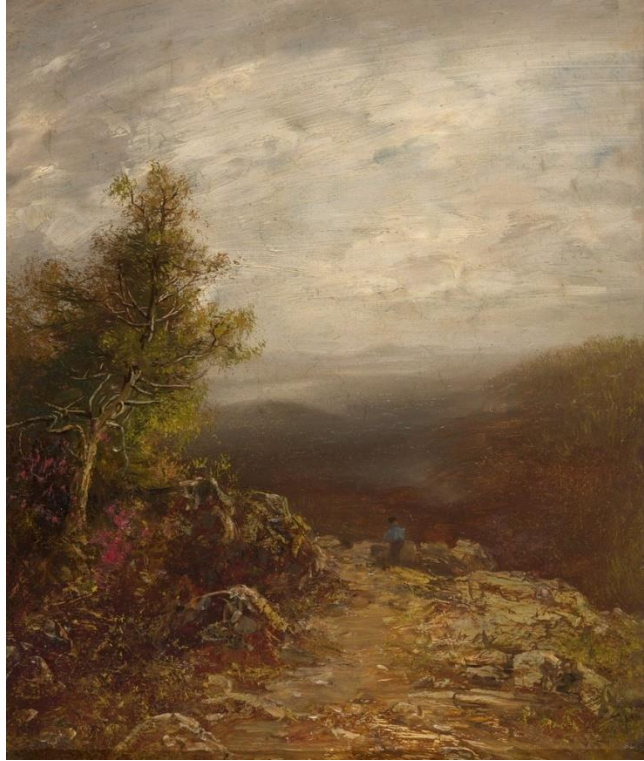
## His Art

He is especially known for his paintings of moonlight. Here is one of his most famous:



Moonlight, 1886

Here are more of his paintings:



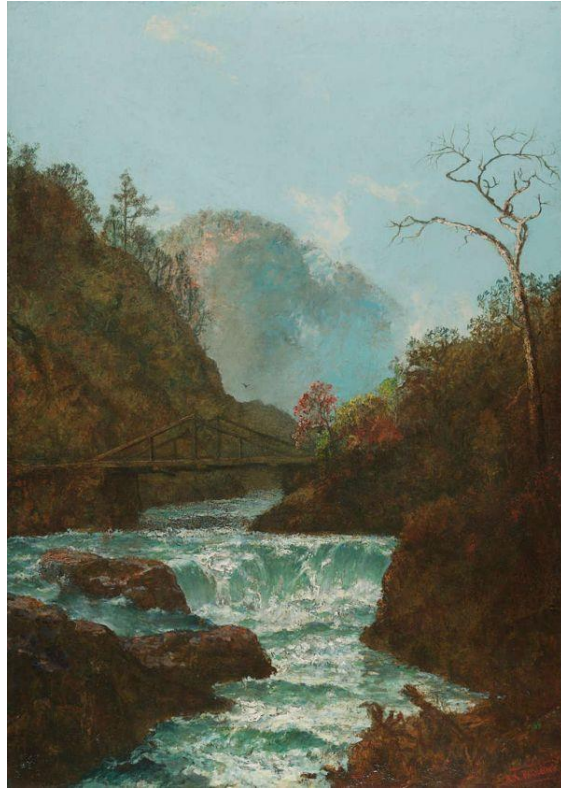
Above the Clouds, 1887-78



The Artist's Garden, 1879-89



Transcendental Landscape, 1895



Pawpak Falls, Hawley, Pennsylvania

Is there anything in the paintings that you find inspirational?  
How do you think his Swedenborgianism influenced his work?  
Is there anything in his life or work that inspires your own creativity?

**Let us pray:**

Dear Divine, Thank you for the blessings of Blakelock's life. Despite his poverty and insanity, he produced beautiful paintings that continue to inspire us today. Help us to take the spark of his inspiration into our hearts and share it with each other. It breaks our hearts that Blakelock was so poor and received so little help. May we in our lives today remember the poor. We grieve at how his mental illness went with so little attention. May we honor and care for the mentally ill among us to day.



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

*Richard Yardumian*

*September 25, 2016*

## READINGS

### From the Bible

#### **Psalm 98, New International Version**

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.  
The LORD has made his salvation known  
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.  
He has remembered his love  
and his faithfulness to Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,  
burst into jubilant song with music;  
make music to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and the sound of singing,  
with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—  
shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

Let the sea resound, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it.  
Let the rivers clap their hands,  
let the mountains sing together for joy;  
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

#### **Apocalypse Revealed (Whitehead) n. 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).



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Answer to Jehovah by confession, play on the harp to our God (Ps. 147:7).  
It is good to confess to Jehovah upon the psaltery, and upon higgsion on the harp.

## Message

### Richard and Nishan Yardumian

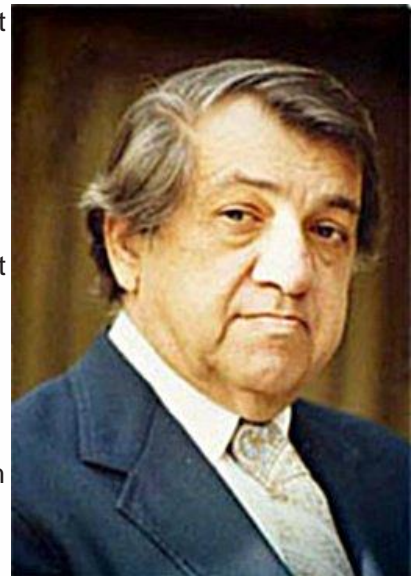
Today we draw to a close our series on painters influenced by Swedenborg. We've looked at: [Ralph Albert Blakelock](#), [William Page](#), [William Blake](#), [Gillian Bedford](#), [Hildegard of Bingen](#), [William Keith](#), [George Inness](#), [Page Morahan](#), [Tamra Amato](#), [D'Ann Loomis](#) and [Kathy Webb](#).

The plan for today is to look at Nishan Richard Yardumian. However, I have found very little information about this Swedenborgian painter who died in 1986. Therefore, I have altered the plan a bit!

First, I'm going to tell you about his father, Richard, who was a great Swedenborgian composer. Later in the year we'll look at Richard in more detail for his music. But today, we'll get to the son a bit through the father.

Then, I'm going to ask for help! Perhaps some of you have some information about Nishan Yardumian, or know where we can learn more. Let's make this a community project to find about more about this painter!

The book *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision* [p. 73] says that Richard was "notably influenced by the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg and whose music gained international recognition..." As an adult, he was active in The Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn until he died at age 68 in 1985.



Richard was born in Philadelphia in 1917 to parents who were Armenian immigrants. He was the last of ten children.

His mother, Lucia, was a teacher and organist, and his father, the Rev. Haig Yardumian, was the founding pastor of the Philadelphia Armenian Evangelical community, which later became the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church.

Richard began playing the piano when he was a young child. His older brother Elijah was a concert pianist and tutored young Richard. He was composing by age 14, and age 19 wrote the music that he is best known for: The Armenian Suite. His music has been recorded by many orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and was the theme music for the Voice of American radio show "Behind the Iron Curtain".

The youngest of ten children to [Armenian](#) immigrant parents, Richard began studying the piano at a

very early age. His mother, Lucia, was a teacher and organist, and his father, the Rev. Haig Yardumian, was the founding pastor of the Philadelphia Armenian Evangelical community, which later became the [Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church](#), now located in [Havertown, Pennsylvania](#).

When Richard was grown, he married a woman named Ruth Seckelman, who was a Swedenborgian. She later said:

*When I first met Richard in 1935, he was trying to express feelings from quite deep within himself. One day I told Richard I knew of something that would give his music the spiritual light and direction he was looking for. When I told him of the New Church and about the Second Coming of the Lord, like a man hungering and athirst, he partook of the study of the "new revelation", and his life, too, was changed. His life and his profession began a new song.*

In the 1950s, Yardumian began writing hymns for [The Lord's New Church Which Is Nova Hierosolyma](#), and later joined the New Church in Bryn Athyn. He became the musical director there.

Yardumian died of complications following a heart attack at home in 1985. He was the father of thirteen children, including pianist Vera Yardumian, painter Nishan Yardumian.

All of the children became involved in music or other arts. Nishan, born in 1947, became a painter. He died in 1986.

That's what I know of Nishan, and I have many questions. Why did he die so young, and just a year after his father? Were Nishan and his siblings raised at Bryn Athyn? What kinds of paintings did Nishan create, and how was he influenced by Swedenborg?

Let's, as a community, pull our resources and see what we can learn about Nishan. We could create a web page for him, and post all that we learn. Probably many people knew him, and could tell us about his life and how Swedenborg influenced his art.

Instead of the usual closing song, we have a concert for you: Richard Yardumian's [Armenian Suite](#).

Let us pray: Dear Lord, thank for the rich blessings of Nishan Yardumian, his siblings, and his father Richard. Your presence is so apparent in their lives! Please guide us each into the depth of our creativity, and into the fulfillment of its "uses." Amen.

Go in peace, celebrating the many blessings we have from the arts!

## Mental Illness Awareness Week

October 2, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### Psalm 40

*Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.  
He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.  
Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.*

#### From Swedenborg

#### Arcana Coelestia 5992

*Angels from the Lord lead and protect us every moment and every moment of every moment.*

## Message Mental Illness Awareness Week



Did you know that this is Mental Illness Awareness Week?

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) (also known as Mental Health Awareness Week) was established in 1990 by Congress to support the efforts of the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI) increase awareness of mental illness and provide education. [see also [NAMI Faith-Net](#).]

Yet mental illness can be its own special pathway to God. That was certainly true for Anton

Theophilus Boisen.



Anton Theophilus Boisen was a minister who became schizophrenic, and had to be hospitalized. Through his psychotic episodes, he discovered the relationship between the spiritual and the psychotic. He started the field that has become pastoral counseling.

He was born October 28, 1876, in Indiana, where his father was a professor of languages.

He graduated from Bloomington High School in 1893 and then attended Indiana University where he received a BA in Modern Languages. He taught French in a high school in Bloomington for a couple of years, but explored an interest in psychology he developed at Indiana University, and read William James.

He then went to Yale to study forestry. He got a master's degree in the field, but one day walking down the streets of New Haven, he felt a call to ministry. The next day, on April 2, 1905 the President of Union Theological Seminary in New York, Rev. Henry Sloan Coffin, was preaching at the chapel service. His subject was the "Call to Ministry." This was a synchronistic moment for Boisen, and he felt his own call to ministry being confirmed. So, in 1908 he left his job as a forester, and he enrolled at Union Seminary in New York City .... He received a Bachelor of Divinity from Union Seminary in 1911.

Boisen was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1912.

In 1920, he wanted to go into parish ministry, and in the process of writing his Statement of Faith in preparation for a call through the Brooklyn New York Presbytery, he became obsessed with delusional fantasies. He had a mental breakdown. And he was committed to Boston Psychiatric Hospital and later he was at Westboro State Hospital. He was treated for catatonic schizophrenia. He described his experience as " a most profound and unmistakable madness."

He was hospitalized for psychotic breaks several times from 1920 to 1922, and during the hospitalization, he felt a calling to "break down the dividing wall between religion and medicine." He believed that certain types of schizophrenia could be understood as attempts to solve problems of the soul.



Later, in recovery, he reflected on this experience, and he began to understand his illness as related to the diversity of religious experiences. He wrote: "Certain types of mental disorder and certain types of religious experience are, alike, attempts at reorganization." He'd learned during Dr. William Lowe Bryan's classes at IU that "at the peak of a human crisis there is a turning toward healing, toward reorganization, toward reconnection."

From the arrhythmia of despair and madness, there emerged a transformation, a new rhythm, the vital primal rhythm of life that Dr. Bryan called a religious experience of the Holy. Upon reflection, Boisen said he had "broken an opening in the wall that separated religion and medicine." It was after studied reflection on this initial episode of mental illness that he discovered his true call to ministry.

Boisen found an overlap between mental illness and spirituality. He had schizophrenic episodes, yet they were profound spiritual experiences. The more he explored his spirituality, the less often he had episodes until they stopped all together.

Psychologist David Lukoff writes:

*Psychotic and religious experiences have been associated since the earliest recorded history, and undoubtedly before. The Old Testament uses the same term, in reference to madness sent by God as a punishment for the disobedient, and to describe the behavior of prophets. ... Boisen, who was hospitalized for a psychotic episode and then became a minister, maintained that:*

***Many of the more serious psychoses are essentially problem-solving experiences which are closely related to certain types of religious experiences ....***

Many people have found themselves going through an intense experience – and they don't know whether they are having a spiritual experience, a psychotic one, or both.. An organization called [Spiritual Emergence Network](#) helps such people find mental health professionals with a spiritual background to help people in such situations.

[Psychologist David Lukoff](#) suggests that we should see that, in addition to psychotic experiences and spiritual experiences, there are states that contain elements of both and might require help from both mental health providers and spiritual helpers.

This is quite consistent with Swedenborg's approach to "both/and" rather than "either/or." We need to engage our physical, mental, and spiritual selves for complete wholeness.

This is a good week to learn more about mental illness .... and come to a greater understanding of mental illness in your community -- and perhaps even in your family or yourself.

Dear Lord,

Give us understanding of mental illness, and how it can be a part of our journey with You. Give us compassion for those who suffer from mental illness, and help us see You in them. Allow us all to learn from these valuable members of our communities.

## ***The Meaning of Peace – Muller***

**October 9, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### ***John 14:27-31 (NIV)***

"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. You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me."

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### ***Heaven and Hell §286***

"Divine peace is within the Lord, arising from the oneness of his divine nature and the divine human nature within him. The divine quality of peace in heaven comes from the Lord, arising from his union with heaven's angels, and specifically from the union of the good and the true within each angel. These are the sources of peace. We may therefore conclude that peace in the heavens is the divine nature intimately affecting everything good there with blessedness. So it is the source of all the joy of heaven. In its essence, it is the divine joy of the Lord's divine love, arising from his union with heaven and with every individual there. This joy, perceived by the Lord in the angels and by the angels from the Lord, is peace. It flows down from there to provide angels with everything that is blessed and delightful and happy-what is called "heavenly joy."

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: Peace in the heavens is the divine nature profoundly touching everything good and true there with a blessedness that is beyond our comprehension. Divine peace occurs in what is good, but not in what is true apart from what is good."

## **Message The Meaning of Peace**

by Rev. Thom Muller



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Love, Spirit, Life



Peace is one of those incredibly abstract terms. As with many abstract terms, we are infatuated with it. It speaks to us on a deep deep spiritual and psychic level. Peace. Today when I think of peace, as many of us I'm sure, I think of current political situations. My desire for peace seems mundane, almost ironic, even offensive at the sight of the women, men and children suffering from critical violent circumstances in Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Ukraine. I think of the turmoil of addiction, of disease, of loss.

We may disagree on our visions for ourselves and humanity, on the purpose of existence or lack thereof, thereby often creating even more turmoil. But we all desire peace. And to some level, as long as we are in a human condition, our desire seems to go unsatisfied. We are all, to one degree or another, emotionally, physically and spiritually susceptible to our often chaotic, confusing, and in some cases threatening and destructive life circumstances. All of us.

"I just want to be at peace" - I feel like that expression encapsulates so much of what we all strive for. Life, so many times does not seem peaceful, in fact, sometimes it seems that this world makes being "at peace" incredibly difficult.

There are constant threats to our being at peace. Competitive economy, the complexity of human relationship, there are all kinds of theft, murder, disease, etc. It seems that our human condition is simply set up NOT to be at peace...

But threats to what? What are we ACTUALLY afraid of?

When I investigate this in myself, it seems that any fear or anxiety, any unrest, any non-peace really has its roots in a fear of separation. Separation from a loved one, separation from the things I have grown used to – my profession, my beliefs, my identity. Separation from a sense of purpose and meaning, losing that which I have constructed to be my "comfort zone".

The image of separation, it sometimes seems, lies at the core of our existence. Illustrated by the casting out of the Garden of Eden, which Swedenborg interprets as our choice as humans to perceive ourselves as separate and disconnected from God and others.

I'd like to take a look again at our Swedenborg reading, which I find to propose an intriguing look at the notion of what peace is and how it relates to the divine:

*"Divine peace is within the Lord, arising from the oneness of his divine nature and the divine human nature within him. The divine quality of peace in heaven comes from the Lord, arising from his union with heaven's angels, and specifically from the union of the good and the true within each angel. These are the sources of peace. We may therefore conclude that peace in the heavens is the divine nature intimately affecting*

*everything good there with blessedness. So it is the source of all the joy of heaven. In its essence, it is the divine joy of the Lord's divine love, arising from his union with heaven and with every individual there. This joy, perceived by the Lord in the angels and by the angels from the Lord, is peace. It flows down from there to provide angels with everything that is blessed and delightful and happy-what is called "heavenly joy."*

*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: Peace in the heavens is the divine nature profoundly touching everything good and true there with a blessedness that is beyond our comprehension. Divine peace occurs in what is good, but not in what is true apart from what is good." -HH §286*

This resonates with Christ's statement in the ...

*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. -John 14:27 (NIV)*

Christ claims that he IS peace itself. From a Swedenborgian perspective, the second coming of Christ is present with us as a new spiritual reality in our collective and individual evolution, so consequently, this peace is available to us and is at our disposal.

And how do we do it? The answer is simple and profound at the same time: By loving connection. Swedenborg goes even a step further and says that Peace, aka God IS the ultimate reality. We are designed for union, destined for union. For connection. With each other and with God. Let us reject the enticements of anxiety and fear, and realize them as expressions of what we know to be true. We need to be connected to be at peace.

As we identify and transcend those things separating us from God-consciousness, we also tend to embrace that which feeds our soul, that which resonates with us, not on a purely intellectual, nor a purely religious or philosophical way. We identify things we perceive as manifesting that path towards the light. We identify it in scripture, in science, in conversation and so on. We engage in practice. We may begin to pray, to meditate, to read sacred texts, to attend church or some other kind of spiritual community or however else we feel we can increase our connection to the light. We are re-forming our desires, our states, our understanding.



As we become more and more in-tune with ourselves, each other, and the Divine, we may begin to notice that beyond the appearance of truth we find in the teachings, practice, scripture, theology and community, there is an even deeper layer of truth, which becomes manifest when we put our faith into action.

This week, I invite all of us, as we go through life, to be in mindful awareness of our loves, our motivations. When we think, act, and talk, let's ask ourselves: "Am I creating connection or separation?" God Is Reality. God Is Peace. And peace wants nothing more than to be shared. Amen.

## Poetry of Robert Frost

October 16, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### John 12: 36

Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

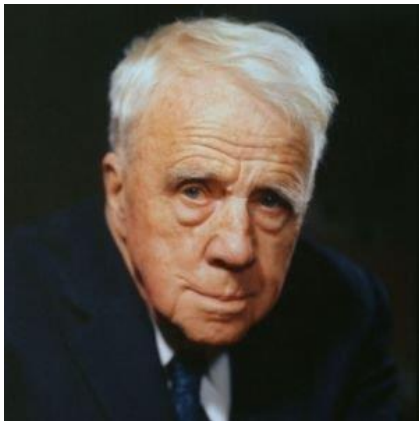
#### From Swedenborg

#### Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 6476

Whenever I have been reading the Lord's prayer, I have plainly perceived an elevation toward the Lord which was like an attraction, and at the same time my ideas were open, and from this there was effected a communication with some societies in heaven; and I noticed that there was an influx from the Lord into every detail of the prayer, thus into every idea of my thought that was from the meaning of the things in the prayer. The influx was effected with inexpressible variety, that is, not the same at one time as another; hence also it was made evident how infinite are the things contained in the prayer, and that the Lord is present in every one of them.

## Message Robert Frost: Poetry as Prayer

Our theme this month is "Scriptural Messages in Poetry." We'll be experiencing poetry as a restful form of worship, by reading poets who were or are Swedenborgians or influenced by Swedenborg. Today, our poet is Robert Frost.



Robert Lee Frost was born March 26th, 1874, in San Francisco. He was named after General Robert E. Lee. His father, William Prescott Frost, was a Confederate, a Universalist, and an active alcoholic.

The Frosts had not been in San Francisco for long. Mrs. Frost was Presbyterian, but not finding the right worship community with Presbyterian churches. She enjoyed books of UU minister Thomas Starr King, so they attended King's former San Francisco congregation for a while. She started

reading Emerson, and soon found herself reading Swedenborg. Frost's mother joined the Swedenborgian church in San Francisco.



When Robert was in 2nd grade, she had him baptized by Swedenborgian minister Rev. John Doughty. Not long afterwards, Robert started hearing voices. When he told his mother, she said that he had "second sight," as she did. She encouraged him not to talk about it with others.

In 1885, his father died of TB, and Rev. Doughty did the service. Then Robert, with his mother and little sister, moved to Lawrence, Massachusetts to live with his father's family. He hated the discipline of the Frost household. He started attending Universalist services with his grandparents.

His mother moved the children to Salem, New Hampshire so that she could teach school there.



And so Robert grew to adulthood. He attended Harvard briefly, and fell in love with fellow student, Elinor White. In 1895, when he was a reporter in Lawrence, they were married.

Neither of them belonged to a church, but Rev. John Haynes, the Salem Swedenborgian minister, performed the ceremony December, 19, 1895. The service was held in the school where Robert's mother had her private school and Elinor was a teacher. The Lawrence Swedenborgians met in the same rented downtown office space, where the Frost family also lived. Most of the guests at the wedding were Swedenborgians.

In 1923, Frost wrote:

*What is my philosophy? That is hard to say. I was brought up a Swedenborgian. I am not a Swedenborgian now. But there is a good deal of it that's left with me. I am a mystic. I believe in symbols. I believe in change and in changing symbols. Yet that does not take me away from the kindly contact of human beings. No, it brings me closer to them.*

Frost died Jan. 29, 1963. He died on Swedenborg's birthday! His daughter, Lesley, asked the Unitarian minister Palfrey Perkins to conduct a service.

Some of Swedenborg's concepts that are in Frost's poetry include: Love as the essence of reality, Correspondences, and a process of spiritual growth.

## Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of poetry that sings in our hearts. Help us to learn Your scriptural love and wisdom through verse.



## Poetry of Edwin Markham

October 23, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### Matthew 21: 18-22

The Fig Tree Withers

*Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.*

*When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.*

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

#### From Swedenborg

#### Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 885

That a "leaf" signifies truth, is evident from many passages in the Word where man is compared to a tree, or is called a tree, and where "fruits" signify the good of charity, and a "leaf" the truth therefrom (which indeed they are like); as in Ezekiel:

*And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, there cometh up every tree for food, whose leaf doth not fall, neither is the fruit consumed, it is reborn every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for medicine*

(Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 22:2).

Here "tree" denotes the man of the church in whom is the kingdom of the Lord; its "fruit" the good of love and of charity; its "leaf" the truths therefrom, which serve for the instruction of the human race and for their regeneration, for which reason the leaf is said to be for "medicine."

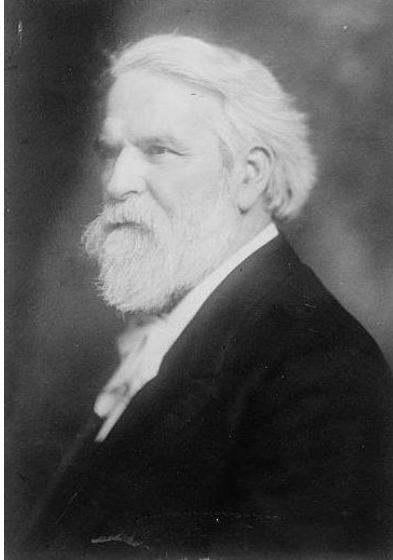
## Message Edwin Markham (1852-1940)

### Markham's Life



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Charles Edwin Markham was born in Oregon City, Oregon, in 1852, as the youngest of 6 children. His parents separated several years later, and he rarely saw his father after that. He moved with his mother and sister to central California where he lived and worked on a farm.

He studied literature and then attended San Jose Normal school, and taught for several years and then became superintendent of the county schools.

Markham began writing poetry around 1872, and he had sold a poem by 1880. He wrote poetry for *Harper's*, *Century*, and *Scribner's*. By 1898, he had had two divorces, and married Anna Catherine Murphy. That year he wrote, "The Man with the Hoe." The poem was based on the 1862 painting by Jean-Francois Millet. Markham read the poem at a New Years' Eve party, and it was published by the *San Francisco Examine*.

"The Man with the Hoe" received a great deal of publicity. It supported the labor movement and working conditions, and started Markham's reputation as a social reformer and champion of the working class. He became a popular speaker at labor meetings.

In 1922 Markham, read his poem "Lincoln, the Man of the People" at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial. On his 80th birthday in 1932, he was honored at Carnegie Hall by Pres. Hoover as one of the most important poets of his time.

He wrote a number of books of his poems, including: *The Ballad of the Gallows Bird* (1960, Antioch Press), *Eighty Poems at Eighty* (1932), *Gates of Paradise* (1920), *Lincoln and Other Poems* (1901), and *The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems* (1899).

His book, *Children in Bondage*, was written in 1914 and was an important contribution. Markham died in 1940.

## ***THE MAN WITH THE HOE***



The Man with the Hoe, by Jean-Francois Millet

### **The Man with the Hoe**

by Edwin Markham

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans  
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,  
The emptiness of ages in his face,  
And on his back the burden of the world.  
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,  
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,  
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?  
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?  
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?  
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?  
Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave  
To have dominion over sea and land;  
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;  
To feel the passion of Eternity?  
Is this the Dream He dreamed who shaped the suns  
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?  
Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf  
There is no shape more terrible than this --  
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed --  
More filled with signs and portents for the soul --  
More fraught with menace to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!  
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him  
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?  
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,  
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?  
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;  
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;  
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,  
Plundered, profaned and disinherited,  
Cries protest to the Judges of the World,



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A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,  
Is this the handiwork you give to God,  
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?  
How will you ever straighten up this shape;  
Touch it again with immortality;  
Give back the upward looking and the light;  
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;  
Make right the immemorial infamies,  
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,  
How will the Future reckon with this Man?  
How answer his brute question in that hour  
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world?  
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings --  
With those who shaped him to the thing he is --

### Markham's Beliefs & Swedenborgianism

Markham was raised a Methodist. He came to know Thomas Lake Harris around 1876, and may have learned about Swedenborg from him.

[Harris was a Universalist minister who came to know Andrew Jackson Davis, and became involved in Spiritualism, and then became a Christian. He discovered the Swedenborgians, and before long considered himself and his congregation to be Swedenborgian. This view was not shared by the Swedenborgian Church! For more on Harris and David, see [Wings and Roots](#). ]

Markham wrote a poem about Swedenborg, and often quoted Swedenborg. He spoke at Swedenborgian Churches, but never officially joined the church.

This is a quotation from *New Church Life*:

*The New York Society has, on a number of occasions, been addressed by the poet, Edwin Markham, who is a professed Newchurchman. In January, Mr. Markham addressed the congregation at the close of the services. After a sketch of his own life, and his study of the Bible; Mr. Markham then told how he had been led to see "that a revelation of truth had been made through Swedenborg," whom he characterized as "the eye of the eighteenth century," and whose writings he has been studying for forty years. Mr. Markham also addressed members of the Church in Boston, Brookline and Cambridge, Mass. He has an original and forceful style.*

In Marguerite Block's *History of the New Church*, she refers to Markham as representing the "Social Gospel" dimension of the church. She quotes him as saying this in the Boston Church:

*If Swedenborg had never expressed another idea than his immortal saying, "All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good," he would have given the world enough to inspire a hundred seers. I never speak his name without emotion. He lifted me out of a quagmire of theology; he lifted me up to see the stars. [Block, p. 348]*

Here are two more of his poems:

### ***A Song to a Tree***

Give me the dance of your boughs, O tree,  
Whenever the wild wind blows;  
And when the wind is gone, give me  
Your beautiful repose.

How easily your greatness swings  
To meet the changing hours;  
I, too, would mount upon your wings,  
And rest upon your powers.

I seek your grace, O mighty tree,  
And shall seek, many a day,  
Till I more worthily shall be  
Your comrade on the way.

### ***A Prayer***

Teach me, Father, how to go  
Softly as the grasses grow;  
Hush my soul to meet the shock  
Of the wild world as a rock;  
But my spirit, propt with power,  
Make as simple as a flower.  
Let the dry heart fill its cup,  
Like a poppy looking up;  
Let life lightly wear her crown  
Like a poppy looking down,  
When its heart is filled with dew,  
And its life begins anew.

Teach me, Father, how to be  
Kind and patient as a tree.  
Joyfully the crickets croon  
Under the shady oak at noon;  
Beetle, on his mission bent,  
Tarries in that cooling tent.  
Let me, also, cheer a spot,  
Hidden field or garden grot—  
Place where passing souls can rest  
On the way and be their best.

What are your reactions to his poems? Do they help you connect with God and humanity? Where do you see Swedenborgian influences - and scriptural messages in his life and works?



## **Poetry of the Brownings**

**October 30, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

Isaiah 59: 16-21

And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence.

So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

#### **From Swedenborg**

True Christian Religion (Rose) n. 116

Many passages in the Word make it clear that while he was in the world the Lord fought battles against the hells, conquered them, brought them under control, and made them obedient to himself. I will extract just a few.

In Isaiah:

...

These words are about the Lord's battles against the hells. The clothes in which he was honorable and which were reddish mean the Word, to which the Jewish people had done violence. The combat itself against the hells and victory over them is described by his trampling people in his anger and stamping on them in his rage. The fact that he was alone and fought from his own power is described by these phrases: "there was no man from the people with me;" "my arm performed salvation for me;" and "I made the enemies' victory go down into the ground." His bringing salvation and redemption as a result is described by these phrases: "That is why he became their Savior;" and "because of his love and mercy he redeemed them." The fact that this was the reason for his coming is meant by these phrases: "the day of revenge was in my heart and the year of my redeemed had come."

Also in Isaiah:

He saw that there was no one and was astounded that there was no one interceding. Therefore his own arm performed salvation for him and justice made him stand up. Then he put on justice like a breastplate

and a helmet of salvation on his head. He put on the clothes of vengeance and covered himself with zeal like a cloak. Then the Redeemer came to Zion. (Isaiah 59:16, 17, 20)

## Message Elizabeth Barrett Browning



Elizabeth Barrett was born in 1806 in Durham, England. The Barrett's were wealthy plantation owners in Jamaica, where they used slave labor. The family was part Creole. She was tutored at home, and had read many of Shakespeare's plays before she was ten. When she was twelve she had written an epic poem! At fourteen she suffered a lung problem, and the next year she sustained a spinal injury. These problems were with her the rest of her life. She continued reading the classics, and became involved in her local church. By 1832, the family fortunes were exhausted, due in part to the abolition of slavery in England.

Her family lived in a cottage by the sea, where she spent one year. During that time her brother died sailing nearby. She was devastated. She then lived in London with her father, who was a tyrant. She spent the next five years, a recluse, living in the bedroom of her father's London home; but continued her writing.



In 1844, she published a volume of her poetry, in which she praised the poet Robert Browning. He wrote her a letter. Despite his being 6 years younger than she, they exchanged hundreds of letters in less than two years. Her father was opposed to the romance, as portrayed in the 1930 play, [\*The Barrettes of Wimpole Street\*](#), by Rudolf Besier (1878-1942), later made into a 1934 movie and several TV movie versions. In 1846, they eloped and moved to Italy, where they had a son; Robert Wideman Browning. Her father never spoke to her again. In 1850, her book, [\*Sonnets from the Portuguese\*](#), was published, dedicated to her husband, and based on the letters they wrote before their marriage. It is considered to be one of the most widely-known romantic poems in English.

Political and social themes embody Elizabeth's later work. In 1857 she published a verse novel, *Aurora Leigh*, which has the theme of male power over woman. In her poetry she also dealt with issues like the oppression of the Italians by the Austrians, the child labor mines and mills of England, slavery, and other social issues. This focus made her less popular as a poet. Elizabeth Barrett Browning died in Florence on June 29, 1861. Her final poem was set to music:

## SWEDENBORGIAN INFLUENCE

Alice Skinner wrote this about Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

*[She] was introduced to the works of Swedenborg in 1851 by a friend from London, Miss E. F. Haworth. Her letters to friends include references to her reading of Swedenborg and discussions of his ideas. In a letter to her sister Henrietta in 1857, Browning called herself "a Swedenborgian." [p. 180]*

Our two romantics, Robert and Elizabeth, read Swedenborg's *Conjugial Love* together in Florence early in their marriage. Elizabeth often mentioned reading Swedenborg and she acknowledged his influence on *Aurora Leigh* (1857). Robert didn't directly talk about a Swedenborgian influence, but he and Elizabeth were both friends of the English Swedenborgian, Charles Augustus Tulk, and Robert was an early friend of James John Garth Wilkinson. As mentioned above, she may have been introduced to Swedenborg by a friend, E.F. Haworth. In a letter, Browning called herself a Swedenborgian.

## SWEDENBORGIAN CONCEPTS

Alice Skinner notes that Elizabeth lived out the Swedenborgian values of "uses" in her work. She took on the causes of many who were oppressed. In *Aurora Leigh*, she "examines the meaning of useful work at length, including a confirmation of the value of simply performing one's everyday tasks." [P. 361, *Continuing Vision*] In addition to her social justice themes, her poetry is filled with a celebration of love and references to God.

## POETRY

### A poem about Love

***How Do I Love Thee? (Sonnet 43)***  
**by Elizabeth Barrett Browning**

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use

In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

### A poem about God

#### Chorus of Eden Spirit by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

HEARKEN, oh hearken! let your souls behind you  
Turn, gently moved!  
Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,  
O lost, beloved!  
Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled angels,  
They press and pierce:  
Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—  
Voice throbs in verse.  
We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden  
A time ago:  
God gave us golden cups, and we were bidden  
To feed you so.  
But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,  
No work to do,  
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining  
The whole earth through.  
Most ineradicable stains, for showing  
(Not interfused!)  
That brighter colours were the world's foregoing,  
Than shall be used.  
Hearken, oh hearken! ye shall hearken surely  
For years and years,  
The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,  
Of spirits' tears.  
The yearning to a beautiful denied you,  
Shall strain your powers.  
Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,  
Resumed from ours.  
In all your music, our pathetic minor  
Your ears shall cross;  
And all good gifts shall mind you of diviner,  
With sense of loss.  
We shall be near you in your poet-languors  
And wild extremes,  
What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,  
Or mock with dreams.  
And when upon you, weary after roaming,  
Death's seal is put,





By the foregone ye shall discern the coming,  
Through eyelids shut.

Do any of these poems inspire your own worship of the Divine? What would it be like to write your own poem/prayer/hymn to God?



## ***Spiritual Seasons***

**November 6, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

#### **Genesis 16 (NRSV)**

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her,

"Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin."

So she named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are El-roi"; for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?" Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

#### **John 16: 20-24 (NRSV)**

Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

#### **From Swedenborg**

#### **Emanuel Swedenborg, *Secrets of Heaven* §1948-9**

In the state represented by Ishmael, we are solely in truth -even though it be the truth of faith- and who is not in the good of charity at the same time, is altogether of such a character. One becomes a morose person, will bear nothing, is against all, regards everybody as being in falsity, is ready to

rebuke, to chastise, and to punish; has no pity, and does not apply or adapt oneself to others or through study to challenge their own ideas; for he or she looks at everything from truth, and at nothing from good.

All the genuine rational consists of good and truth combined, that is, of the celestial and the spiritual. Good, or the celestial, is its very soul or life; truth, or the spiritual, is what receives its life from this. Without life from celestial good, the rational is such as is here described, that is, it fights against all, and all fight against it.

Rational good never fights, however much it is attacked; because it is mild and gentle, patient and yielding; for its character is that of love and mercy. Yet although it does not fight, it conquers all, nor does it ever think about combat, or glory on account of victory; and this because it is Divine, and is safe of itself.

## Message

# Spiritual Seasons: Contemplating Change and Rebirth

by Rev. Thom Muller



Fall time has always been very meaningful for me, as a time for contemplation, and being confronted with the change of seasons, the finite-ness of natural life, the ever-repeating circle of birth growth, death and rebirth.

I find it beautifully coincidental that Swedenborg begins one of my favorite works of his, "The Worship and Love of God", which I consider to be a wonderful record in Swedenborg's early breakthrough from natural scientist to mystic, by talking about being moved by the changing seasons, to contemplate the profound wonder and mystery and transcendent beauty we witness in this process.

I think this time of the year lends itself to being an opportunity for us to look at our inner life, to reflect on how we are engaging, consciously and subconsciously, with the transcendent within us and around us, and the Divine.

I'd like to relate this to the concept of the New Church, a new age of spiritual development and connectedness which Swedenborg claimed was unfolding, a new potential to unite the seeming paradox of rationality and spirituality, of affection and volition, of love and wisdom. A way for humanity to look beyond constructs of race, creed, belief set, or practice to coexist on harmonious diversity.

This all sounds beautiful, but looking at our lives right now, it may appear abstract, utopian, if anything, a far-off fantasy world. Looking at humanity collectively, we are all too aware of the injustices, the hatred, and the egotism we see in this world. Looking at our own lives, we also become aware of what we perceive of our shortcomings, and the imperfection of our surroundings.

Swedenborg was not a "false prophet" in that sense. In fact, he claimed that the change and growth he was seeing would be very gradual, and that things would pretty much stay the same, except that there would be a dramatic increase of spiritual freedom and development.

I'd like to take a closer look at how spiritual growth might work in the framework that he sets up. I believe he provides a chance for this in his esoteric interpretation of the biblical narrative of Abraham, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac. As usual, Swedenborg understands the scriptural narrative to contain a deeper meaning, which relates to universal psycho-spiritual realities, and so our every-day inner life. To him, the narrative we read represents our own development as spiritual people, struggling with the seeming paradox of reason and faith, and hopefully, become what he calls "genuinely rational". So Abraham, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac are all aspects of our own spiritual consciousness. Abraham, according to Swedenborg, symbolizes the "inner person". Hagar symbolizes a love of knowing things which are at the material, natural level of reality. Ishmael represents the reasoning from that love.

Swedenborg sometimes likens this to one particular season of life, which is adolescence, but this is a dynamic which repeats over and over again in countless complex ways in our inner life. Basically it is a state in our spiritual development when we are preoccupied with a kind of rationality which is absolute and combative, I didn't pick this story simply because it has the phrase "wild ass man" in it, but I must admit it makes it an easy pick, and my inner 13 year old will always giggle at it. In the readings we read a description of what this "wild ass man attitude" looks like. It is a state in which we love to be right, and for others to be wrong, and we have a tendency to overlook the transcendent aspects of life which give nuance to our reasoning.

I can find myself in this illustration. Both looking at seasons of my life in the past, and today, even if the state might only last for a moment or two.

We might think of televangelists blaming earthquakes on homosexuality, or militant atheists creating a one-sided scientist materialism as a response to fanatical and misguided theism. I believe whole groups can be subject to this kind of an approach. In particularly sick cases, we see merciless fundamentalism and absolutism turn violent, even genocidal.

What are the times, and the situations in our lives where we are stuck in this kind of a state, the "Ishmael Rational"?

Then there is the quality that corresponds to Isaac. He, according to the narrative, is the "genuine" son of Abraham and Sarah. Isaac represents a state in our development which hopefully, potentially, follows the useful but on the long run problematic and unsatisfying state of Ishmael. In contrast to a reasoning that relies almost exclusively on what we perceive to be "truth", the Ishmael rational is a state in which we encounter what Swedenborg calls "genuine rationality". It develops when we combine our love for facts, our love for being right, our combativeness and our suspicious skepticism with affection, with goodness and love, with tolerance and understanding, and a renewed sense of nuance and Objectivity. It is that binding of the "Yin and Yang" of love and wisdom, which signifies the "new church" and the second coming of Christ within and around us.

I'd like to repeat the reading from Secrets of Heaven about this state, the union of goodness and rationality:

*"Rational good never fights, however much it is attacked; because it is mild and gentle, patient and yielding; for its character is that of love and mercy. Yet although it does not fight, it conquers all, nor does it ever think about combat, or glory on account of victory; and this because it is Divine, and is safe of itself." (Secrets of Heaven 1949)*

I find interesting parallels between Swedenborg's conceptions of spiritual development, and that of other mystics and thinkers. This dynamic lends itself to a comparison to what the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur referred to the dynamic of the "first and second naïveté". Ricoeur conceptualizes healthy spiritual growth as beginning in a state he refers to as the "first naïveté", an interpretation of scripture (or religious belief) where everything is taken at face value. This is the same as saying that the person in the first naïveté believes everything about his religion literally.

According to Ricoeur, the rational forces brought to our civilization through modernity have made it difficult to accept religion or scripture in the "first naïveté" sense. Once subjected to rational inspection, the literal meanings of religion really do not hold up. Once a person allows him or herself to take a step back from religious belief, and examine it critically, they really cannot believe the simple, naïve, concepts his religion teaches at face value. This "critical distance" is the equivalent of the rational level of spiritual development.

After the critical distance phase, Ricoeur suggested, there is a way to engage faith in what he called a "second naïveté" way. "Beyond the desert of criticism" (the purely rational stage). In this second naïveté, scripture and religious concepts are seen as symbols which represent deeper, much more nuanced spiritual realities. This means we accept that the myths we held as truth during our first naïveté are in fact myths, but having passed through the critical distance (or rational stage) we begin to re-engage these concepts at a different level. We no longer accept them at face value, as presented by religious authorities, but rather interpret them for ourselves, in the light of having assumed personal responsibility for our beliefs. We choose move toward our own interpretation that recognizes these concepts as symbols of something greater than that which the words or teachings imply in their literal sense. This "second naïveté", Ricoeur also refers to as the "mystical stage" of spiritual development.

Just like in Swedenborg's way of looking at this development, these are seen as stages which can repeat again and again, in different aspects of our inner life, and are a part of our gradual spiritual development. Like all other parts of nature, we are subject to gradual change, externally and internally. Rather than judging ourselves for what we might think are our shortcomings, let us view ourselves as trees changing color through the seasons. Tuning into the soft breeze of love and divinity which rids us of habits and beliefs which have become obsolete. Aware of our finite-ness, but also aware of that which is eternal, our spiritual essence, the divine reality of love and wisdom which is at the very core of everything that truly is.



When Swedenborg was taking his walk through nature that inspired him to look deeper, to gradually approach a more intimate, more real, more rich and more full experience of divine reality, I wonder if he had any inclination where this would lead him. I invite all of us to make use of this time of natural, gradual change, and the coming season, to look at our inner lives honestly, and to seek connection with the divine, with each other, and with our true, angelic selves.

Let's take this time of contemplation, of obvious reminders of the finitude and cyclical nature of reality, as a chance to embrace a balance in our thinking and acting, let's honor our rationality, as well as our intuition, and our sense that beyond all that which appears finite lies unlimited spiritual potential.



***Holy Mother - Wholly Human***

***November 13, 2016***

**READINGS**

**From the Bible**

**Isaiah 66:7-13**

"Before she goes into labor,  
she gives birth;  
before the pains come upon her,  
she delivers a son.  
Who has ever heard of such things?  
Who has ever seen things like this?  
Can a country be born in a day  
or a nation be brought forth in a moment?  
Yet no sooner is Zion in labor  
than she gives birth to her children.  
Do I bring to the moment of birth  
and not give delivery?" says the Lord.  
"Do I close up the womb  
when I bring to delivery?" says your God.  
"Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her,  
all you who love her;  
rejoice greatly with her,  
all you who mourn over her.  
For you will nurse and be satisfied  
at her comforting breasts;  
you will drink deeply  
and delight in her overflowing abundance."  
For this is what the Lord says:  
"I will extend peace to her like a river,  
and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream;  
you will nurse and be carried on her arm  
and dandled on her knees.  
As a mother comforts her child,  
so will I comfort you;  
and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."

**Luke 1:46-56 (NIV)**

And Mary said:  
"My soul glorifies the Lord  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is his name.  
His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.



He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.  
He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful  
to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as he promised our ancestors."

### From Swedenborg

#### Emanuel Swedenborg, True Christianity § 457

With all of us, God flows into our concepts of him and brings us true acknowledgment of him. He also flows into us and brings us his love for people. If we accept only the first inflow but not the second, we receive that inflow with our intellect but not our will. We keep the concepts of God that we have without arriving at an inward acknowledgment of God. Our state is then like a garden in winter.

If we accept both types of inflow, however, we receive the inflow with our will and then our intellect - that is, with our whole mind. We then develop an inner acknowledgment of God that brings our concepts of God to life. Our state is then like a garden in spring.

Goodwill makes the connection, because God loves every one of us but cannot directly benefit us; he can benefit us only indirectly through each other. For this reason he inspires us with his love, just as he inspires parents with love for their children. If we receive this love, we become connected to God and we love our neighbor out of love for God. Then we have love for God inside our love for our neighbor. Our love for God makes us willing and able to love our neighbor.

We can not do anything good if it does not seem to us that our power, willingness, and actions come from ourselves. Therefore we are granted the appearance that they do. When we freely do something good as if we were acting on our own, this goodness is attributed to us and is taken as our response, and this forges the connection.

## Message Holy Mother - Wholly Human

by Rev. Thom Muller



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life





I'd like to share a theme that's really meaningful to me. In our Judeo-Christian tradition, it seems, we have often limited our concept of the Divine to masculine images. More and more, people are expressing how constrained they are in their traditional view of God.

Looking at my own life, and how I feel the Divine has manifested in it, I personally feel that there is a lot of spiritual and psychological significance to the experience of motherly love. I'm not trying to be essentialist here, I have seen what I would call motherly love in many people who are not biological mothers, as well as folks who are not biologically female.

There's something about a motherly presence. I associate this motherly presence with some of my earliest childhood memories of my mother tucking me into bed and kissing me goodnight. There's something archetypal and almost primal about that experience of unconditional love and security that I believe is a manifestation of the Lord's love for us.

We read about Mary in the Gospels, including the gnostic gospels.



Veneration of Mary goes back to the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. Collyridianism ("COLLY-RIDIANISM"), an early Christian sect in Arabia, worshipped Mary as Mother Deity.

Today, it is mostly the liturgical movements (Catholicism, Anglican Communion, Eastern Orthodox Churches).

Growing up Roman Catholic in Germany, I always felt a very deep connection with Mary, as a figure which represents a "motherly" spiritual quality, a way to relate to the divine not in the usual, predominantly patriarchal images that are common in Western religion.

In my own engagement with eastern religion, I have experienced the beauty of approaching the

Divine in an endless variety of manifestations, including ones which are female, and even androgynous.

Clearly, the Christian engagement with the character of Mary has served as an outlet in Western Religion to imagine the Divine outside of a male-centric framework. I can only speculate, as a man, how powerful this has been for women in a patriarchal society and religious environment.

So there seems to be something very powerful, spiritually valuable in the image of Mary.



In 1950, when Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the assumption of Mary (the belief that she rose physically to heaven), Carl Jung's response was that this was the most significant movement in Christianity since the Reformation. He, of course, considered the psychological and socio-cultural significance of the narrative (we all know he wasn't even Catholic). He considered Mary to represent the "Mother Archetype", and saw the elevation of Mary as a profound step towards integrating a deep psycho-spiritual need in our engagement with the Divine.

Throughout history, different Mystics have engaged the theme of Mary really beautifully.

One that stands out is the 13th Century German Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, who suggested that the virgin birth, the carrying and birthing of the divine, was a universal spiritual experience we all ought to go through.

Joseph Campbell picks up on this. "The birth of spiritual person out of animal person," (or the spiritual person emerging out of the natural person) and what he calls "the birth of compassion."

He also mentions the universality of the narrative of the "virgin birth" throughout cultures and world religions. In *The Power of Myth*, stated:

"Heroes and demigods are born this way, as beings motivated by compassion and not mastery, or self-preservation. This is the sense of the second birth, when you begin to live out of the heart center rather than from selfish motivation." (Campbell, Joseph, and Bill D. Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 1988. Print.)

So, there are all these beautiful ways to engage with the image of Mary. And of course, Swedenborg has something to say.

I'm assuming most of us that would identify as "Swedenborgian" are comfortable with a variety and diversity in approaching the Divine. Swedenborg emphasizes the transcendence of the Divine, which

is not bound by time or space, and which lies at the very center and core of all life, the underlying reality of everything. He also emphasizes the importance of relating to the divine through a divine-human manifestation that we, in our humanity, can relate to. And he has a very high, incarnational Christology.

Yet we all know that the dominant voice in this discussion, in our patriarchal society, has been male, and there is an undoubtable male bias in our many traditions. In the first reading, from the Psalms we encountered one of many instances in the Word where the Divine is illustrated in a distinctly feminine way. Suffice it to say that I don't think this discussion needs to be about the idea of a divine gender, rather, I think we're a level beyond, a deeper level of spiritual meaning.

Those of you who are seasoned in a Swedenborgian tradition know that traditionally, sectarian Swedenborgians haven't exactly been known to venerate the Virgin Mary.

The only case of Marianism in the history of organized Swedenborgianism that I am aware of is in the Swedenborg Rite of Freemasonry, which interestingly includes a veneration of Mary.

One, among many reasons for this, historically, is that Swedenborg, like folks like Campbell and Meister Eckhart, places great emphasis on Mary's humanity.

Hand in hand with common religious conceptualizations of Mary in some traditional Christian movements goes the belief in her as being "immaculate", (or "spot-less" in English). So the term "immaculate conception" doesn't actually refer to Mary's sexual virginity, but her "sin-less", quasi-divine nature. This of course often ties in to a belief which we know Swedenborg was not a big fan of, "Original Sin".

Swedenborg, in his interpretation of the Christ narrative, and the metaphysics behind it, focusses on Mary's human side.

He understands Christ's mission as the story of a struggle between Humanity and Divinity, eventually reconciling them in what he calls his "Glorification". So one side of Christ is his divine identity, his divine, soul, core or essence, and the other side is the human condition, with everything that goes with being born as a human being. The genetically inherited flaws, unhealthy inclinations, "temptations". To me, this represents a cataclysmic and salvific union of Humanity and Divinity. And in the Christ-Narrative, we encounter the Divine Humanity which is at the core of Swedenborg's concept of what he refers to as "the Lord".

So it is Mary's gift of humanity, and the human-ness of her motherhood, which enables this process.

This, of course, does not paint a negative image Mary. In fact Swedenborg relates in several of his works, a vision of Mary that he had in the spiritual world. He sees her sort of pass by, dressed in beautiful robes and she speaks to him very humbly about her role and mission.

And I think there is something about Mary in this framework that is easily overlooked. Swedenborg believed that the Lord's humanity was present with him from birth, but that he gradually, through time, became aware of his own divinity.

This makes me wonder what role Christ's experience of Divine Love AND Wisdom that he had with his mother, Mary, played in this process. I wonder if he had fond memories of her tucking him into

bed and kissing him goodnight.

So now that we have looked at all these different wonderful interpretations of the character of Mary, we might, again, be walking away with more questions than answers.

Some of those questions, to me, include:

How do we engage the character of Mary in both its symbolic, and correspondential fullness, in a way that brings forth a deeper connection between the Divine, and our true, angelic Selves?

How does the character of Mary in the Word represent different aspects of our own journey, as well as aspects of the Divine? What does it mean for us, to "give birth to divinity out of humanity"?

and

What role, generally, does gender play in our personal engagement with the Divine? Is this something we struggle with?



Today, I invite all of us to meditate on the times that we have felt the Lord's love manifest in them.

One of the take-aways for me is to approach both the character of Mary, and the concepts of divine femininity and masculinity with an open, thankful, and holistic mind-set.

Being aware that there are countless, infinite ways in which the Divine shows him/her/itself to me. To appreciate them indiscriminately.

And being willing, and courageous, just like Mary, to birth God into this world, to be willing to receive and to share the Divine Love and Wisdom which mothered us into existence. Amen.

**Jones Very**

**November 20, 2016**

## READINGS

### From the Bible

#### John 15 (New International Version)

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 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.*

*"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. 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. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

### From Swedenborg

#### Divine Providence #30

*The Lord's heaven in the natural world is called the church; an angel of this heaven is a man of the church who is conjoined to the Lord; on departure from this world he also becomes an angel of the spiritual heaven. What was said of the angelic heaven is evidently to be understood, then, of the human heaven also which is called the church. The reciprocal conjunction with the Lord which makes heaven in the human being is revealed by the Lord in these words in John: Abide in me, and I in you; . . . he who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing (John 15:4, 5, 7).*

## Message Jones Very 1813-1880



Jones was only 11 when his father died, and he started working at 14 to help support his Mother and siblings. He educated himself, and was accepted into Harvard as a sophomore. He graduated in 1836 with honors. He then entered Harvard Divinity School and studied for the Unitarian ministry. He was a tutor in Greek, and began writing poetic notes to encourage his students. He began to lecture on epic poetry, which brought him to the attention of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was extremely impressed

by his brilliance, ability, and religious fervor. Very became part of the group around Emerson that called themselves "transcendentalists."

This group differentiated themselves from a Unitarian theology that saw reality and religion as based in rational thought. The "transcendentalists" saw reality as having an intuitive, inner knowing that was based in the Divine.

Very was a deeply religious mystic. He had profound personal experiences of God and tried to be an obedient servant. In 1839, Emerson helped him publish his first book, *Essays and Poems*. Emerson was extremely frustrated with Very; Emerson tried to edit the work, and Very insisted that every word came from God, and it could not be edited! Emerson's demanding persistence wore down Very on most of those arguments.

Very's religious fervor came to alarm those around him. He claimed to be the Second Coming, and then told his students to flee to the mountains, for the end was at hand. He especially alarmed people when he went about Salem baptizing other Unitarian ministers! He was put into the McLean Asylum, where he taught the patients about poetry. His doctor finally concluded that he could find no mental or physical illness in Very, and released him. He stayed for a while with Emerson in Concord.

Emerson defended Very's sanity, as did most of the other Transcendentalists.

Very withdrew to Salem, where he lived out a quiet and contemplative life.

## **SWEDENBORGIAN INFLUENCE**

Was Jones Very influenced by Swedenborg? We do not know for certain that he even knew of Swedenborg. However, we can assume that he probably did. Why?

The Transcendentalists were influenced by the work of mystics, and they particularly read Swedenborg. Emerson was impacted by Swedenborg. His book "Nature" mentioned Swedenborg, and we know that Very purchased a copy and read it numerous times. Very's approach to the inner, intuitive way of knowing was quite consistent with Swedenborg. Emerson commented at one time that the work of Jones was quite Swedenborgian.

### **The Poetry of Jones Very**

#### *Faith*

There is no faith; the mountain stands within  
Still unrebuked, its summit reaches heaven;  
And every action adds its load of sin,  
For every action wants the little leaven;  
There is no prayer; it is but empty sound,  
That stirs with frequent breath the yielding air,  
With every pulse they are more strongly bound,  
Who make the blood of goats the voice of prayer;  
Oh heal them, heal them, Father, with thy word,—  
Their sins cry out to thee from every side;  
From son and sire, from slave and master heard,  
Their voices fill the desert country wide;  
And bid thee hasten to relieve and save,  
By him who rose triumphant o'er the grave

### *The Prayer*

Wilt Thou not visit me?  
The plant beside me feels Thy gentle dew;  
And every blade of grass I see,  
From Thy deep earth its quickening moisture drew.

Wilt Thou not visit me?  
Thy morning calls on me with cheering tone;  
And every hill and tree  
Lends but one voice, the voice of Thee alone.

Come, for I need Thy love,  
More than the flower the dew, or grass the rain;  
Come, gently as Thy holy dove;  
And let me in thy sight rejoice to live again.

I will not hide from them,  
When Thy storms come, though fierce may be their wrath;  
But bow with leafy stem,  
And strengthened follow on Thy chosen path.

Yes, Thou wilt visit me,  
Nor plant nor tree Thing eye delights so well,  
As when from sin set free  
My spirit loves with Thine in peace to dwell.

### *The Light from Within*

I saw on earth another light  
Than that which lit my eye  
Come forth as from my soul within,  
And from a higher sky.

Its beams shone still unclouded on,  
When in the farthest west  
The sun I once had known had sunk  
Forever to his rest.

And on I walked, though dark the night,  
Nor rose his orb by day;  
As one who by a surer guide  
Was pointed out the way.

'Twas brighter far than noonday's beam;  
It shone from God within,  
And lit, as by a lamp from heaven,  
The world's dark track of sin.



### *The Silent*

There is a sighing in the wood,  
A murmur in the beating wave;  
The heart has never understood  
To tell in words the thoughts they gave.  
Yet oft it feels an answering tone,  
When wandering on the lonely shore;  
And could the lips its voice make known,  
'T would sound as does the ocean's roar.  
And oft beneath the wind-swept pine,  
Some chord is struck the strain to swell;  
Nor sounds nor language can define,—  
'Tis not for words or sounds to tell.  
'Tis all unheard, Your silent Voice,  
Whose goings forth, unknown to all,  
Bids bending reed and bird rejoice,  
And fills with music Nature's hall.  
Now in the speechless human heart  
It speaks, where'er our feet have trod;  
Beyond the lips deceitful art  
To tell of You, the Unseen God.





## What Dreams May Come

November 27, 2016

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### Psalm 69: 30-34

*I will praise God's name in song  
and glorify him with thanksgiving.  
This will please the LORD more than an ox,  
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.  
The poor will see and be glad—  
you who seek God, may your hearts live!  
The LORD hears the needy  
and does not despise his captive people  
Let heaven and earth praise him,  
the seas and all that move in them,*

#### From Swedenborg

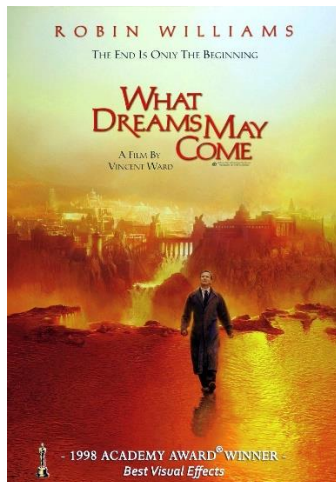
#### Apocalypse Explained (Whitehead) n. 689. Verse 17.

*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 What Dreams May Come



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life



Happy Thanksgiving! This is a time when many are with friends and family, and enjoying time together.

For some, it can be a time to pull out old favorite movies to enjoy again – or see for the first time.

Since we are looking at poetry and fiction in relationship to Swedenborg and scripture, this is a good time to look at one of my favorite movies – that came from a novel.

*What Dreams May Come* was released in 1998 and sparked many discussions among Swedenborgians. The film won the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects at the 71st Academy Awards in 1998. It was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Art Direction. It won the Art Directors Guild Award for Excellence in Production Design.

The movie was based on the book of the same name by Richard Matheson. He took the name from Shakespeare:

*For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause.*

—Hamlet, Act III, Sc. 1

## The Movie Plot [**Caution: contains spoilers!**]

### PART I

Chris and Annie are a happily married couple with two children. They are deeply in love with each other. Tragically, both of the children are killed in an auto accident. Annie is devastated. She strives to recover by becoming absorbed in painting.

### PART II

There is a tragic automobile accident, in which Chris is killed. He doesn't believe he is dead, and visits his wife and others. He wanders into his funeral, quite confused. A friendly figure keeps explaining to him that he is dead, but he resists that awareness for a long time. We see some flashbacks of his life.

Of particular interest to us is that one of the painters who influenced this portrayal is George Inness,

Swedenborgian painter of the Hudson River School.

### PART III



Chris wakes up in heaven, and is reunited with his beloved dog, who he had had to put to sleep.

Heaven is shown to be whatever one creates in his/her mind. For Chris, he sees the paintings of Annie coming to life. We see scenes of Annie painting, and then what she paints becomes part of Chris' heaven. They have a connection through her paintings and his heaven.

Chris sees Annie's painting of her dream home, where they had hoped to retire. The setting becomes real in heaven.

Heaven is largely portrayed through paintings, many of them influenced by masters of the past.

### PART IV

Chris is told that he and Annie are soulmates, which makes complete sense to him. He misses Annie terribly. His guide gives him bad news: Annie has just killed herself. In the movie, suicides end up in hell. [in the book, Annie had to go to hell for 24 years; the number of years that she had taken off her life from suicide.]

Chris refuses to let her stay there without him. He decides he will visit hell to find her and bring her back to heaven. He finds a guide to help him.

### PART V



The movie switches scenes to hell, where paintings are like those of Bosch and Dali.

Chris' guide warns him of the danger in the book:

*"The search for her will involve many frightening dangers," he said, "but these are external dangers. If we find Ann and you try to help her, you'll be subject to internal threat. Returning to a level of primitive development, you'll be strongly influenced by it. Lowering your vibration to that of earth's, you will no longer be able to think clearly but will be subject to the same confusion of thought with which your wife lives constantly. In this weakened state, you will not only risk losing your effort on her behalf, you could very easily be so affected that you'd become as much a prisoner of that level as she is."*

In the book, there is quite an emphasis on the fact that hell does not exist. People who are suffering in hell, believing they are being punished, are wrong. They are not being punished, except by themselves. Deplorable living conditions would be gone instantly if only the person wanted to leave.

At last, Chris finds Annie. She is living in a caricature of their early home, but this one is very run down and dilapidated. Annie does not know she is dead. She believes she is depressed and hopeless, and in an overwhelming situation with her home falling down around her. Of course, she does not recognize Chris despite all he does to help her remember. Finally, Chris gives up. He will never get Annie to trust enough to leave hell for heaven. Chris loves Annie so much, that he would prefer hell with her to heaven without her. With the depth of that love, Annie remembers who he is and understands that she is dead.

### **PART VI: The Ending**



The details in the book and movie vary slightly. However, in both of them Annie and Chris return to earth to reincarnate. In the movie, Annie hesitates to return to earth for fear that she won't be able to find Chris again. He says: "I found you in hell; I sure can find you in Jersey!" In the movie, the final scene is of two young children meeting each other and becoming friends.

## **THE SWEDENBORGIAN CONNECTIONS**

One of the questions Swedenborgians have discussed frequently about this movie is: how accurately does it portray Swedenborg's concept of the afterlife? Richard Matheson, author of the novel on which the movie was based, knew of Swedenborg. A character in the novel quotes Swedenborg favorably. Matheson himself was raised a Christian Scientist, and then developed his own religion from various sources. He was especially influenced by studies of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and [Raymond Moody](#). You may have heard of Moody's work; especially his book, *Life After Life*. He created the term "Near Death Experience." You may not know that Moody had read Swedenborg, and had been greatly impressed by his writings of the afterlife. Moody talked about Swedenborg in his first book, and he sometimes speaks before Swedenborgian groups. The Matheson movie certainly propelled Moody's work into the public light.

In the bibliography of his book, Matheson doesn't list any of Swedenborg's works, but he does list [Moody](#), who had been influenced by Swedenborg.

The art director was inspired by a range of paintings, including some by George Inness, a Swedenborgian painter of the Hudson River school.

### **THE SWEDENBORGIAN QUESTIONS**

1. What about reincarnation? Swedenborg saw no evidence of reincarnation and believed that it did not exist. Through the years, students of Swedenborg have debated that question, with a range of different conclusions. In 1998, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence wrote a review of the

movie in the *Messenger*. He said: "*This is a reincarnation picture, very intentionally so. The plot is driven by the spiritual mechanics envisioned in the Americanized pop-culture version of reincarnation.*" Because of this, he felt that the movie was not an accurate portrayal of Swedenborg's theology.

However, there are Swedenborgians who also believe in reincarnation. Wilson Van Dusen<sup>[1]</sup> felt that Swedenborg confused two doctrines of reincarnation: He writes: "Most people believe that reincarnation means the individual returns again to this world. I will show this to be an idea that, although inaccurate and illusory itself, points toward the real truth: that God, the universal, returns endlessly." He calls these the "lesser doctrine" and the "greater doctrine." Swedenborg did not accept the lesser doctrine about the individual returning, but did write about the "greater doctrine." Van Dusen says the oriental religions advocate the greater doctrine of reincarnation, which puts them in the same place as Swedenborg on the topic of reincarnation. Van Dusen did also think that individual past life memories could be important for an individual to understand, regardless of one's belief about it.

2. What about suicides? Swedenborg has little to say about suicide, and did not seem to see it as a sin or act of evil.

My sense of Swedenborg is that he was quite sensitive to mental health issues, and saw the after-life as a place to right imbalances. I was quite uncomfortable with the suggestion in the book and movie that suicides meet a harsher fate than others in the afterlife. Data from **Near Death Experiences** suggests there is no difference.

3. The artistic heaven. Swedenborg saw art as a reflection of God, so such a heaven sounds Swedenborgian. However, Swedenborg's own experiences in heaven were very social and in communication with others. Chris' heaven seems to be just a personal journey into his own mind. The heaven I understand from Swedenborg is much more involved with interaction and community.
4. The hell: Hell is seen as almost a psychological state of despair and depression. I think that that contradicts Swedenborg's understanding of mental illness. In the movie and book, many of the residents of hell are ordinary people who have sunk into despair. In Swedenborg's hell, it is truly evil people who are attracted to it -- people who engage in constant power struggles for ego control. His hell is based on people who lived a evil life by intentionally doing destructive things; not ordinary people who were depressed.



5. Overall: It is rare to find a depiction of heaven and hell that does have so many similarities to Swedenborg. In the movie, we do create our own heaven and hell. It is only we who banish ourselves to hell, and we are free to leave at any time once we realize that. The scenes of a newly-deceased person as he leaves his body and makes his way to heaven seen quite true to Swedenborg.

A central tenant of Swedenborg's is that heaven and hell are not places, but rather states of mind. We are creating heaven and/or hell each day of life on earth. We should not assume that we only experience these states after death. Actually, we are creating heaven and hell for ourselves every day.

How are you creating a heaven for yourself today? What blessings are you creating in your life for yourself? For others?

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, thank you for this U.S. Thanksgiving. Help us become aware of the many blessings we each have in our lives, and to give to those who have less.

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[1] Wilson Van Dusen, "Reincarnation: the Universal Return," in *The Country of Spirit* [J. Appleseed and Co, 1992, pps. 38-48.



*Turning the Other Cheek by Thom Muller*

*December 4, 2016*

**READINGS**

**From the Bible**

**Isaiah 50:4-9 (NRSV)**

The Lord God has given me  
the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning he wakens—  
wakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.  
The Lord God has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious,  
I did not turn backward.  
I gave my back to those who struck me,  
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;  
I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.  
The Lord God helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;  
he who vindicates me is near.  
Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together.  
Who are my adversaries?  
Let them confront me.  
It is the Lord God who helps me;  
who will declare me guilty?  
All of them will wear out like a garment;  
the moth will eat them up.

**Matthew 5:38-48**

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

**From Swedenborg**



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## Heavenly Secrets 9049

*Who is going to turn his left cheek to one who has smacked him on the right cheek? Who is going to give his cloak to one who wishes to take away his tunic?*

*Who is going to give what he has to all who ask for it? And who will not resist evil? But these words cannot be understood by anyone who does not know that the right cheek and the left, tunic and cloak, a mile, a loan, and all the rest are being used to mean. The subject in these verses is spiritual life or the life of faith, not natural life, which is the life of the world.*

## Message

### Turning the Other Cheek

by Rev. Thom Muller



At this time of the year, Advent, we attempt to find time for contemplation, and to find ways to be kind to each other. But especially this year, it seems that there is so much division and tension in the air that can make it very difficult to feel at peace with one another.

In His request to "turn the other cheek" we are invited to reflect on our reactions to wrongdoing, when we are its victims. In the face of an emotional assault, do we clench with anger and coil up, repay wrong for wrong? Or do we have the courage to resist that primal urge and to be merciful instead of vengeful? It seems that we sometimes need these words of encouragement, reminding us to rise above our instinctive desire to repay injustice, and instead be moved to think about what's going on in other people's minds as we experience our own thoughts and emotions.

It is difficult to counter cruelty with mercy. Christ addresses this by means of the very words He chose during His Sermon on the Mount. The things He asks here intentionally go against our common sense-- beyond what we would reasonably expect to be asked of us. Think about what it means to "turn the other cheek." A person slaps you in the face. Such an act is an affront to our selfhood. It is a way of cutting someone to the core--of provoking us to almost certain anger. Yet the Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, says in effect, "Let him slap you again."

A major idea is contained within Christ's introduction to His message: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'" (*Matthew 5:38*). This is the law of retaliation. A tribal and primitive notion of punitive justice, symbolizing our lowest state in moral development. It is the exact opposite of the Golden Rule which Christ spoke of later in the same address: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (*Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31*). So, I think that on



one level, this is meant to challenge our more primal urges, in favor of a more spiritually evolved reaction. And yet, there is an even deeper symbolic, correspondential meaning below the surface.

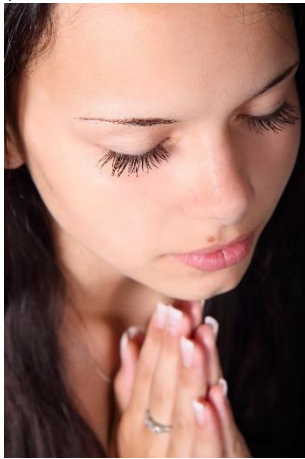
In "Secrets of Heaven", Swedenborg addresses this saying of Christ:

*"Who can fail to see that these words should not be taken literally?"*

*Who is going to turn his left cheek to one who has smacked him on the right cheek? Who is going to give his cloak to one who wishes to take away his tunic?*

*Who is going to give what he has to all who ask for it? And who will not resist evil? But these words cannot be understood by anyone who does not know that the right cheek and the left, tunic and cloak, a mile, a loan, and all the rest are being used to mean. The subject in these verses is spiritual life or the life of faith, not natural life, which is the life of the world.*

*(Secrets of Heaven 9049)*



And that's where the key lies. Sure, you can understand this stuff to be relating to physical, earthly life. In that sense, one could see it as a dramatic rhetorical reminder: "You know what, when someone strikes you on the face ....."!

Yet when we apply a Swedenborgian reading of scripture, we uncover some of the deeper psycho-spiritual meaning behind this discourse: A "cheek", according to Swedenborg, represents an interior understanding of the truth (see *Apocalypse Explained* 556:9; cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 9049:6). When we truly understand the Lord's request to resist vengeful motions, we will see that He is asking us to respond from a charitable perspective. "Striking the cheek" represents a desire to destroy (*Ibid.*). When someone steals from us, or is cruel, the Lord asks us *not* to strike back--not to desire to destroy. Instead our goal is to respond from that interior under-standing which is "the other cheek"-from an interior affection of love towards the neighbor. Such is the meaning of His words which follow: "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (*Matthew* 5:43).

So, I believe this speaks to whenever we are faced with an assault, spiritually a desire to destroy - from within or without. We can imagine countless examples. Somebody deeply challenges our own spiritual ideas or identities, somebody says or does something to us we consider spiritually harmful, destructive. Often times, we might be the victim and the perpetrator at the very same time.

Where do we respond from? As a spiritual person, who seeks connection with the divine, and our

fellow beings? The answer is *not* from earthly point of revenge or retaliation. Not from anger, not from rage, not from the instinctive, animalistic, and distinctly earthly urge to meet violence with violence, destruction with destruction, injury with injury. But instead, to respond from what we know to supersede the natural world, from our inner understanding (as opposed to our outer conditioning). Symbolically, we respond with an assault on our being by means of a re-connection with our true (capital S) angelic self, and our constant connection and grounding within the influx of the divine.



Now, back to reality, this may still seem just as absurd and downright unnatural as turning the other cheek when someone randomly slaps us in the face. We might perceive this as just another unrealistic, saintly scenario, part of what annoyed me off about Jesus as a kid. And this might be the part where we are invited to reconsider the spiritual dynamics of this whole idea. If we look at this from a Swedenborgian perspective, this is not about living up to some kind of unrealistic high standard. In Swedenborg's view, there is no angry and judgmental god looking at our actions and deciding to reward or punish us based on how "holy" our decisions are. In fact, there may be times when allowing ourselves to experience our own anger and frustration may be a very healthy experience. What this is a reminder of is that, at least according to the old Swede, we choose, my means of our actions, our spiritual associations. If we cultivate the states of anger, revenge, a need for control and retaliation, we are welcome to do so. But the point of the whole thing is that by doing so, we are essentially moving ourselves away from a loving connection to each other and the great I AM, which has at its very foundation the love and the wisdom we have at our disposal.

This is one of the classic chances we have to experience what many mystics have called the realization of Christ consciousness in ourselves.

## ***Joy to the World***

***December 11, 2016***

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Philippians 4:4-13**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, 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. Keep 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.

I 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. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I 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. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

#### **From Swedenborg**

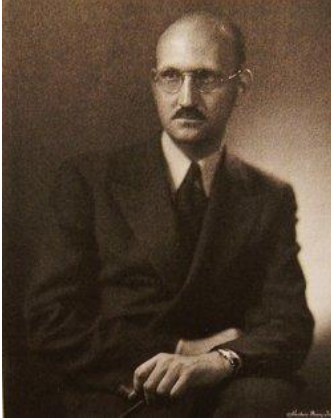
##### **Divine Providence #37**

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.

## **Message** **Joy to the World**

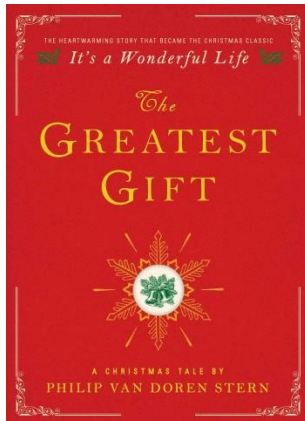


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Philip Van Doren Stern [1930-84] was a respected researcher and historical author. He had a dream one night, in the late 1930's. The next morning he wrote it down, and realized he had written a short story. He titled it "The Greatest Gift: A Christmas Tale." 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.

The story begins with George Bailey hanging over the railing of a bridge, preparing to jump in and end his life – when a quiet stranger grants his wish to never have been born! The little [booklet](#) is in print, audio and on kindle.



Stern's daughter, Marguerite Stern Robinson, writes an afterword in this edition and says she remembers a Saturday morning in February 1938 when her father was shaving and talking about the dream he had that night – a dream that came as a complete short story from beginning to end!

He tried writing it that spring, but had never written fiction and didn't like his effort. In 1943 he tried again and sent it to an agent – who couldn't get anyone interested in buying it! So that Christmas, he made it into a 24-page Christmas card to send to 200 friends.

A few magazines ran the story.

That spring he got a telegram from his agent that a studio who had seen it and wanted to buy the movie rights! Frank Capra left the service in 1945 wanting to do a movie with the message that no one is a failure, and anyone with friends is rich. A studio told him about this Christmas card they had purchased and he was thrilled. He felt that Jimmy Stewart would be perfect for the role. Stewart

was thinking of leaving acting after his time in the service and was hesitant. But he agreed and the rest is history!



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 success, Capra considered it his favorite film, and Jimmy Stewart felt it was his 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 year. However, the messages are clearer in the original short story, "The Greatest Gift." It contains some important lessons for us in this 3rd week of Advent.

Below is a summary of his story:

## 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 mud hole 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 seat of 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 2nd week of Advent?

Everyday life can be filled with "despair." 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. We connect to the Divine by serving our neighbor in love.

The more we share this joy with each other, the deeper we experience it ourselves.

In this time of so much violence in the world, let's remember that Swedenborg tells us that Love is far more powerful than hate. Love is the Divine, and is the strongest force that exists.

How does this story inspire you in your own life at this time?





## ***What Child is This?***

***December 18, 2016***

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Luke 2**

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

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."

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **True Christianity, #89**

Now, because God came down, and because he is the design ... there was no other way for him to become an actual human being than to be conceived, to be carried in the womb, to be born, to be brought up, and to acquire more and more knowledge so as to become intelligent and wise. Therefore in his human manifestation he was an infant like any infant, a child like any child, and so on with just one difference: he completed the process more quickly, more fully, and more perfectly than the rest of us do.... He grew up more quickly, more fully, and more perfectly than the rest of us.

## **Message** **What Child is This?**

O little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary  
And gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love  
O morning stars together  
Proclaim the holy birth



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And praises sing to God the King  
And Peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is given  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven  
No ear may hear His coming  
But in this world of sin  
Where meek...

O holy Child of Bethlehem  
Descend to us, we pray  
Cast out our sin and enter in  
Be born to us today  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell  
O come to us, abide with us  
Our Lord Emmanuel  
O come to us, abide with us  
Our Lord Emmanuel



This well-known hymn is soothing to the soul in a week where we have seen the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sandy Hook shootings, and have witnessed a "break-down" of humanity in Aleppo.

*O Little Town of Bethlehem* was written by Phillips Brooks [1835-1893] in 1868. On Christmas Eve of 1865, he had been in the Holy Lands and rode by horseback to the fields where the angels had proclaimed the "good tidings of great joy," There were still shepherds watching over their flocks. He looked at the star-lit sky, and was deeply inspired.

Three years later, Brooks was putting the Christmas Eve service together in his church, and wanted a song the Sunday school children could sing. He jotted down words that reminded him of his Christmas Eve in the Holy Lands three years previously.



Brooks gave the words of this hymn to his organist and Sunday School superintendent, Lewis H. Redner, asking him to compose simple music for the children. Redner couldn't seem to put a tune together. But, on Dec. 23rd, he suddenly woke up during the night and heard a tune that he wrote out. He felt that that inspiration had been from angels. It was the "O, Little Town of Bethlehem" that we now know and love.

Brooks' life was touched by Swedenborg and Swedenborgians.

Helen Keller corresponded with him. A question that Bishop Brooks had been unable to answer for her concerned the apparent condemnation of Jews and other non-Christians. It was only when her Swedenborgian mentor, John Hitz, put into her hands a Braille version of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* that she realized that heaven was for everyone.

Brooks was a reader of Swedenborg, and wrote:

*I have the profoundest honor for the character and work of Emanuel Swedenborg. I have from time to time gained much from his writings.*

Swedenborg found significance in baby Jesus being born in Bethlehem.

*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. - Arcana Coelestia*

(Potts) n. 4594



And who was this child born in Bethlehem? Swedenborg is clear; he was the light.

*[3] As for the source itself of light, this from eternity has existed from the Lord alone, for Divine Good itself and Divine Truth itself, the source of light, is the Lord. The Divine Human which existed from eternity, John 17:5, was that actual light. Because such light was unable any longer to influence the human race which had retreated so far from good and truth and so from the light, and had cast itself into darkness, the Lord was therefore willing to be born and assume the Human itself. - Arcana Coelestia (Elliott) n. 3195: 3*

This light is not just coming into the world, but is coming into each of our hearts:

*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*

Let this coming week be one where you open your heart so that this Light can be born anew inside of you.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, Thank you for the Divine Light that came into the world. Help us to open ourselves this week so the Light can be reborn inside each of us. And us to share the Light with the rest of the world. Amen.

## **Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem**

**December 24, 2016**

### **Luke 2:1-2**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

### **Heaven and Hell (Dole) n. 286<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>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.*

Away I a manger

### **Arcana Celestia, 3900:9**

*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.*

Silent night

### **True Christianity, #89**

*Now, because God came down, and because he is the design ... there was no other way for him to become an actual human being than to be conceived, to be carried in the womb, to be born, to be brought up, and to acquire more and more knowledge so as to become intelligent and wise.*

*Therefore in his human manifestation he was an infant like any infant, a child like any child, and so on with just one difference: he completed the process more quickly, more fully, and more perfectly than the rest of us do.... He grew up more quickly, more fully, and more perfectly than the rest of*



*us ...*  
**Joy to the World**



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## ***The Bells of Christmas Day***

**December 6, 2016**

### **READINGS**

#### **From the Bible**

##### **Luke 2: 4-7**

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. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 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.

#### **From Swedenborg**

##### **Doctrine of the Lord (Dick) n. 21**

Many at this day think of the Lord only as of an ordinary man like themselves, because they think only of His Human and not at the same time of His Divine; when yet His Divine and His Human cannot be separated. "For the Lord is God and Man; and God and Man in the Lord are not two, but one Person; indeed, all together one, as the soul and body are one man." This is according to the doctrine prevailing throughout the whole Christian world and received from its Councils, called the Athanasian Creed. Therefore, lest anyone should henceforward separate in thought the Divine and the Human in the Lord, I entreat him to read the passages quoted above from Luke, as well as the following from Matthew:

The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph; but before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins....

Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth her first born Son: and he called His name Jesus. --Matt. 1: 18-25.

From these words, as well as from the relation of the Lord's nativity in Luke, and from the other passages adduced above, it is evident that the Son of God is Jesus, who was conceived of Jehovah the Father, and born of the Virgin Mary, concerning whom all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

## **Message** **The Bells of Christmas Day**

What do you think about when you hear this beautiful song? It reminds me of the peace that is always accessible to us. We just need to open our hearts to it.

Swedenborg tells us that angels are always with us helping us feel the Divine peace. I love hearing stories about people feeling that an angel has helped bring peace into their life.



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To learn about people's real life angel encounters, I turn to the work of author Glennyce Eckersley.



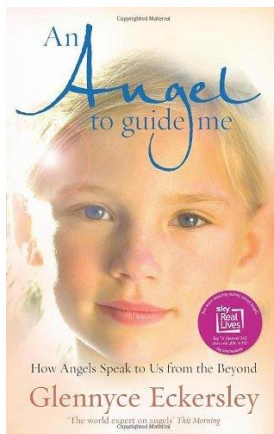
Glennyce Eckersley is a woman in England who started writing down the many stories people told her about angels in their lives. Then she put the stories in categories, and added some Swedenborgian theology about angels. Her book, *An Angel at my Shoulder*, became quite popular in the British Isles and then on the Continent. Then even more people told her their angel stories, and she wrote more books.

I was privileged to meet Glennyce in 2002, when I was in England to be a guest faculty member at New Church College for 6 weeks. I found her to be absolutely delightful with a pure faith around her!

Here is one story she recounts in her book, *An Angel to Guide Me*.

The Advent season of 2008 was extremely cold in Great Britain. The ice was very thick on sidewalks and roads.

Edith was an 85-year-old woman who lived in a little cottage on the British coast.



She tried to stay inside during the bad weather, but she knew that eventually she would have to go out for groceries. After four days inside, the sun came out, and the world looked peaceful and beautiful. She bundled up, and stepped outside. It was extremely cold, but many people were out shopping and walking. She started to cross a road to a shopping center, when she suddenly lost her balance! She felt her body propelled towards the concrete road. She braced for broken bones - - and perhaps even death.

But suddenly, she felt herself being lifted up by loving arms and placed gently down on the ground.



*A couple walking their dog appeared at the top of the steps that led from the beach. They rushed to her aid. 'Are you OK?' they asked, helping her to her feet. Edith looked around but there was no one behind her. 'I'm fine,' she replied shakily. 'If it hadn't been for the kind soul who caught me as I fell I'd surely have broken several bones.' The couple with the dog stared at her in confusion. 'No one caught you,' the man said. 'We saw you fall and rushed up the steps to help – you were completely alone on the promenade.'*

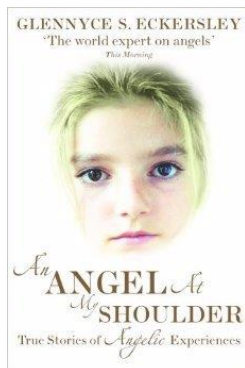
Edith KNEW that arms had picked her up. She had always believed in angels, but this was her first encounter with an angel.

Another story in the same book is "An Angel in the Alps."

It was summertime in the French Alps. Penny was with a group of friends who were mountain climbing for their vacation. Her friends were more experienced climbers than she was, but she bravely tried to keep up. By the 4th day, she was exhausted. Tragically, her foot slipped and she was propelled forward, free falling until her rope caught her and she landed on a small ledge. She saw above that her friend roped to her, had also slipped, but clung to a rock and pulled herself to safety.

Penny was in extreme pain, and clearly was badly hurt. It was too risky for her friends to try to pull her up. They called for help, but there was going to be a long wait. Glennyce writes this:

*Her pain became increasingly intense, and she wondered just what the extent of her injuries would be. Inevitably the worst possible scenarios rushed through her thoughts. At that moment, a warm shaft of sunlight landed on Penny's face – or so she thought at first – as she turned her face away from the rock. Although the day was bright, the sun was well hidden behind the clouds and the intensely bright light was certainly not from sunshine. The warmth and light washed over her, taking her pain with it. In the center of this light, Penny made out a face, beautiful and smiling and very clear. It brought a sensation of calm and confidence. Incredible though it seemed to Penny, she was in no doubt that this was an angel sent to calm her. The angel was with Penny for only a moment, but she knew instinctively that she would be rescued and that all would be well. Although it took a long time for the rescue teams to reach Penny, the feeling of calm and peace stayed with her the whole time. Despite a badly broken leg and wrist, she experienced no more pain, even when being lifted onto a stretcher.*



Penny was quite certain that she had not been hallucinating, but was having an angel encounter. She felt that her grandmother, in the spirit world, had helped in her angelic experience.

I can't think of any other explanation for these stories than the presence of angels. These are just

two of the thousands of angel encounters from all over the world in all traditions.

Swedenborg tells us that we rarely see our protective angels – or feel them or hear them. But they are ALWAYS with us. Let this Christmas Day be a reminder to you of God's peace ever-presence with us!

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, Thank you for the incredible blessings of the birth of baby Jesus on Christmas Day. Help us to open to our hearts to the light and peace that Jesus brought us. And help us to share this love with others. Amen.



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