

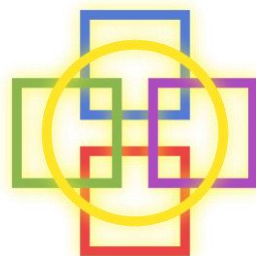


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# SERMON ARCHIVE 2012

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Swedenborgian Community Online



*The Lord in the New Year*

*January 1, 2012*

**READINGS**

**From the Bible**

**John 14: 8-12**

8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. 12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

**From Swedenborg**

**True Christian Religion, #81**

81. In the preceding chapter God the creator, together with creation, has been treated of. This chapter will treat of the Lord the redeemer, together with redemption; and the next chapter of the Holy Spirit, together with the Divine operation. By the Lord the redeemer we mean Jehovah in the human; for in what follows it will be shown that Jehovah himself descended and assumed a human in order that he might effect redemption. The name Lord is used and not Jehovah, because the Jehovah of the Old Testament is called the Lord in the New, as is shown in the following passages.

In Moses:

Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah; and thou shalt love Jehovah God with all thy heart and with all thy soul (Deut. 6:4, 5);

and in Mark:

The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul (Mark 12:29, 30).

Again, in Isaiah:

Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make level in the wilderness a highway for our God (Isa. 40:3);

and in Luke:

Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way (Luke 1:76); besides other

## MESSAGE

Before I discovered Swedenborg, I was a seminary student at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA. It was in the early days of the Feminist-Liberation Theology Program there. Many of us would frequently change the word “*Lord*” in songs and liturgy to “*God*.” We saw “*Lord*” as a hierarchical term of authority, and one that was usually masculine. “*God*,” however, had no connotations of power or authority or gender. It could comfortably be the “creator” and the “ground of all being” for all of us.

When I became involved in the Swedenborgian Church, I was quite uncomfortable with the frequent use of “the Lord.” Swedenborg sometimes spoke of “*God*,” and I couldn’t understand why he didn’t use “*God*” all of the time.

It took me awhile to realize that Swedenborg had very different and specific meanings for “*God*” and “the Lord.”

When Swedenborg talks about the creator of the world, he refers to God. He says that he uses that term in the way that “*Jehovah*” is used in the Old Testament.

*5. As the acknowledgment of God from knowledge of God is  
The very essence and soul of the entire contents of theology, it is  
Necessary that the unity of God should be the first thing treated off.  
This shall be set forth in order in the following sections:  
(1) The entire Holy Scripture, and the doctrines therefrom of the  
Churches in the Christian world, teach that God is one.  
(2) There is a universal influx [from God] into the souls of men  
Of the truth that there is a God, and that he is one.*

Part of the ultimate plan of the Creator God/Jehovah, was to come to earth and take on human form. This is where Swedenborg veers away from most of Christianity. Christians generally believe that God sent his son, Jesus, into the world. Then Jesus left the Holy Spirit, and there was a trinity: Father, son, Holy Spirit.

Swedenborg is quite insistent that Jesus was God taking on human form; not God producing a son. There is only one God, and that one God came to earth in human form with the name of “Jesus.”

As Jesus took on his earthly ministry, he started to call himself “*Lord*.” He was God in a human manifestation. As he walked the earth, his divine nature and human became more closely intertwined. It is similar to our own regeneration, where we bring our human self into complete relationship with the divine. In some traditions, the goal is to rid oneself of all human attributes to strive to be more like the divine. To Swedenborg, however, our humanity is just as important as our divinity; for the Lord is the Divine Human. We are not to try and diminish our humanity, but rather to elevate it into union with divinity. The life of Jesus is a model on how to do that.

Often, the “*Lord*” is used in Christianity as Jesus, the son of God on earth, and the risen

Christ. With the Holy Spirit this completes the trinity.

Because Swedenborg does not accept a "trinity," his use of the term "the Lord" is the Creator/Jehovah who came to earth in human form and is now a complete Divine Human. "God" to Swedenborg is generally Jehovah before taking on a human manifestation. Swedenborg's rejection of "trinity" is confusing, however, for he does recognize three ways that the Lord can be expressed: as Love, as Wisdom, and as Action in the world or Good, Truth, and Charity.

This concept of Swedenborg's sort of gutted the essence of mainstream Christianity - esp. as taught by Luther --that what you did in the world was not all that important as long as you accepted the correct belief before your death. That correct belief was that Jesus was the son of God who died to give you salvation. If you believed that at the time of your death, you would go to heaven even if you had lived a very evil life. However, if you lived a life of love, but didn't have that particular belief about Jesus, you went to hell.

That's why Swedenborg's concept of the "the Lord" opens the door to an acceptance of all religious traditions. Next week, we'll look more at how this plays out in our relationships with other faith traditions today.

On [swedenborgiancommunity.org](http://swedenborgiancommunity.org) we use a variety of terms to refer to the One God – the Divine Human, including "God", or "Divine" or "Divine Human" or "Love and Wisdom" or "Creator" or "Lord" or "spirit." We encourage each person to find the word or words that best helps him or her find the Divine Human.

When you pray, what terms help you feel connected with the Divine Human?

**Let us Pray:**

**[prayer contributed by Rev. Judith]**

*Beloved Lord, our creator, protector, comforter and guide in all things. Help us with Your Inspiration and Care to regenerate into all that we can be.*

*Show us how to achieve Peace, Prosperity, Unity, Harmony and Brotherhood in our world. Show us how to be better Christians and to serve you through our special talents.*

*Thank you for the wonderful year ahead and for the power everyday to do your will. We humbly thank you for the Great year ahead and for opening us to Your Inspiration.*

*Amen. "*

## *The Cosmic Christ*

*January 8, 2012*

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

#### John 15

New International Version (NIV)

*John 15*

#### Vine and the Branches

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

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

#### From Swedenborg

#### Divine Providence: 28 [2]

[2] Now I need to say something about how that union happens and what it is like. There is a union of the Lord with angels and a union of angels with the Lord; so it is a mutual relationship. The Lord flows into the love of angels' lives, and angels accept the Lord in their wisdom, in this way uniting themselves to the Lord in return. It needs to be clearly understood, though, that although it seems to angels that they are uniting themselves to the Lord through their wisdom, in fact the Lord is uniting them to himself through that wisdom, since their wisdom also comes from the Lord.

We could just as well say that the Lord unites himself to angels through what is good and that they in turn unite themselves to the Lord through what is true, since everything good is a matter of love and everything true is a matter of wisdom.

#### MESSAGE

### THE COSMIC CHRIST



I remember hearing Matthew Fox speak at the Episcopal Divinity School in the early 1990's. Fox had recently become an Episcopal priest after being expelled from the Dominican Order for his heretical views, such as “original blessing” over “original sin.”

He was expelled from the Dominicans by Cardinal Ratzinger who, in 2005, became Pope. At that time, Fox traveled to [Martin Luther's church in](#)



Swedenborgian  
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Love, Spirit, Life

[Wittenberg, Germany](#), to post 95 modern theses on the door of the church, calling people to a “New Reformation.”

Some years ago, Fox met with the board of Swedenborg School of Religion to share his “creation spirituality,” and they discussed some similarities to Swedenborg’s teachings.

[Last week’s sermon](#) explored Swedenborg’s view of “The Lord.” This week, we’ll look at Fox’s interfaith concept of “The Cosmic Christ,” and consider what they have in common.

So why are we moving from “the Lord” last week to “the Cosmic Christ” this week?

This is part of our plan for worship in 2012!

## **Convention Yearly Theme**

This year [Aug. 2011 – Jul 2012], for the first time, Convention has put forth a theme for all of us to explore in worship and discussion between annual conventions. That theme is “The Year of the Lord.”

We’ll explore some aspect of this theme each month. Our focus for January is *Finding God*.

[See our [worship page](#) for the other monthly themes.]

## **Web Community Monthly Rotation**

Those of us involved in worship on the web community, struggle with how to keep our worship in some kind of balance, integrating Swedenborg’s teachings with modern approaches to these concepts, and to our own experiences of the themes. We decided that each month, we’ll explore the topic in four ways.

### **Swedenborg’s Wisdom**

Last week, we looked at how Swedenborg used the term “the Lord,” and how, to him, it meant the one God of all traditions.

### **The World’s Wisdom**

In our 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the month we are going to explore the theme in the context of the world today. This approach was especially inspired by the article of Rev. Jim Lawrence’s article in the October 2011 *Messenger*: “[Translating Swedenborg Forward.](#)”

Lawrence explores the question of how relevant Swedenborg’s writings are to the world today. He says that he sees 3 different responses to that question in world-wide Swedenborgian ministries today.

*Many ministries stick closely to careful renderings of Swedenborg’s teachings, often put forth within traditional doctrinal categories. Some ministries, especially in Convention, are straying from working*



*with Swedenborg's ideas and are not trying to engage them anymore. Some ministries seek to creatively engage Swedenborg's spiritual teachings in dialog with the frameworks and questions that people are asking today. I call this third way translating Swedenborg forward and believe it is not only the most exciting way of being Swedenborgian today, but also the most promising for effective outreach.*

So on the second Sunday of each month, we'll be trying to "translate Swedenborg forward," or finding Swedenborg's ideas in the wisdom of the world.

Today, we'll be looking at finding "The Lord" in modern context.

## *The World's Wisdom on The Lord*



Matthew Fox was born in 1940 and became a member of the Dominican order. He received masters degrees in both philosophy and theology from the Aquinas Institute of Theology and later earned a Ph.D. in spirituality (graduating summa cum laude) from the Institut Catholique de Paris. After receiving his Ph.D., Fox began teaching at a series of Catholic universities,

He developed a movement called "Creation Spirituality" that came from places such as:

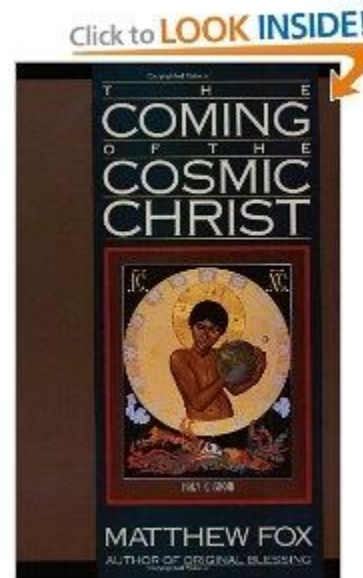
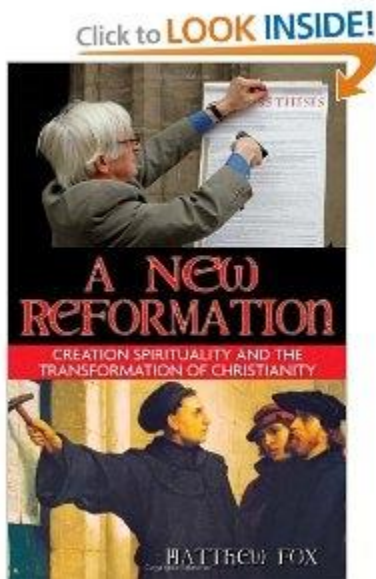
Hildegard of Bingen, Thomas Aquinas, Saint Francis of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, Dante Alighieri, Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa, as well as the wisdom traditions of Christian scriptures.

Creation Spirituality is also a strong advocate of ecological and environmental movements as well as interfaith movements that include Buddhism, Judaism, Sufism, and Native American teachings.

Fox advocated the concept of the Cosmic Christ that represented the One God of all traditions.

*For the New Reformation to take place the West must acknowledge what is now obvious for all to see: There are two Christianities in our midst. One worships a Punitive Father and teaches the doctrine of Original Sin. It is patriarchal in nature, links readily to fascist powers of control, and demonizes women, the earth, other species, science, and gays and lesbians. It builds on fear and supports empire building.*

The other Christianity recognizes the Original Blessing from which all being derives. It recognizes awe, rather than sin and guilt, as the starting point of true religion.



His book, *A New Reformation: Creation spirituality and the Transformation of Christianity*, includes his 95 theses, such as:

*Christians must distinguish between Jesus (a historical figure) and Christ (the experience of God-in-all-things).*

*Eco-justice is a necessity for planetary survival and human ethics; without it we are crucifying the Christ all over again in the form of destruction of forests, waters, species, air, and soil.*

*The Spirit of Jesus and other prophets calls people to simple lifestyles in order that “the people may live.”*

*Dance, whose root meaning in many indigenous cultures is the same as breath or spirit, is a very ancient and appropriate form in which to pray.*

*To honor the ancestors and celebrate the communion of saints does not mean putting heroes on pedestals, but rather honoring them by living out lives of imagination, courage, and compassion in our own time, culture, and historical moment, as they did in theirs.*

*A diversity of interpretation of the Jesus event and the Christ experience is altogether expected and welcome, as it was in the earliest days of the church.*

*God is experienced through acts of creativity and co-creation (via creativa). 51 All people are born creative. It is spirituality’s task to encourage holy imagination, for all are born in the “image and likeness” of the Creative One, and “the fierce power of imagination is a gift from God” (Kabbalah).*

*If you can talk, you can sing; if you can walk, you can dance (African proverb). If you can talk, you are an artist (Native American saying).*



*God is experienced in our struggle for justice, healing, compassion, and transformation [via transformative.*

*The Holy Spirit works through all cultures and all spiritual traditions; it “blows where it will” and is not the exclusive domain of any one tradition and never has been.*

*God speaks today, as in the past, through all religions and all cultures and all faith traditions, none of which is perfect and an exclusive avenue to truth, but all of which can learn from each other.*

*Therefore, an interfaith identity or deep ecumenism are necessary parts of spiritual praxis and awareness in our time.*

*Since the number one obstacle to an interfaith identity is “a bad relationship with one’s own faith” (the Dalai Lama), it is important that Christians know their own mystical and prophetic tradition, one that is larger than a religion of empire and its Punitive Father images of God.*

*All that is, is holy and all that is, is related, for all being in our universe began as one being just before the fireball erupted.*

*Interconnectivity is not only a law of physics and of nature, but also forms the basis of community and compassion. Compassion is the working out of our shared interconnectivity, both as to our*

*Outer work needs to flow from our inner work, just as action flows from nonaction and true action from being.*

*A wise test of right action is this: What is the effect of this action on people seven generations from today?*

*Another test of right action is this: Is what I am doing, is what we are doing, beautiful or not?*

*Authentic science can and must be one of humanity’s sources of wisdom, for it is a source of sacred awe*

All of this can be seen as part of a “Cosmic Christ” far beyond the “Jesus” of Christianity, to represent all traditions. Does this seem to you to be a modern perspective on Swedenborg’s “The Lord?” Do you find that any of Fox’s other 95 theses resonate with Swedenborg?

**Let us Pray:**

**[prayer contributed by Rev. Judith]**

**Inspiration and prayer for 1/8/12:**

**Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.  
Psalm 141: 2 NKJV**

**"Holy God, let me turn my mind and tongue over to you through prayer in all my communications, especially when discussing religion and spiritual principles. Thank you, Lord, for the gifts of Tolerance, Prayer & Humility."**

**AMEN**

**Rev. Judith**

## Amazing Grace: Transformational Love

January 15, 2012

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

##### John 1

*14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and[b] is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

#### From Swedenborg

Apocalypse Explained (Whitehead) n. 22

*22. Grace to you and peace, signifies the delight of truth and good. This is evident from the signification of "grace" as being the delight of truth (about which more presently); and from the signification of "peace," as being the delight of the good of innocence and love (on which see in the work on Heaven and Hell, where the State of Peace in Heaven is treated of, n. 284-290). "Grace" means the delight of truth, because there are two things that proceed from the Lord, united in their origin, but separated with those that receive them. For there are those that receive more the Divine truth than the Divine good, and those that receive more the Divine good than the Divine truth. Those that receive more the Divine truth than the Divine good are in the Lord's spiritual kingdom, and are therefore called spiritual; but those that receive more the Divine good than the Divine truth are in the Lord's celestial kingdom, and are therefore called celestial (On these two kingdoms in heaven and in the church, see in the work on Heaven and Hell, n. 20-28.) To those in the spiritual kingdom it is granted by the Lord to be in the affection of truth for the sake of truth; and this Divine is what is called grace; so far, therefore, as anyone is in that affection is he in the Lord's Divine grace; nor is there any other Divine grace with man, spirit, or angel, than to be affected by truth, because it is truth, since in that affection there is heaven and blessedness for them (see in The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine, n. 232, 236, 238; and Heaven and Hell, n. 395-414). Whether we say the affection of truth or the delight of truth it is the same; for there is no affection without delight.*

*[2] This in particular is what is meant by "grace" in the Word; as in John:*

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt in us, and we beheld His glory, a glory as of the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth, of His fullness we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 16-17).*

*It is said "grace and truth," because grace is the affection and the delight of truth.*



## MESSAGE

### *Amazing Grace: Transformational Love*



[John Newton](#) was the captain of a slave ship when God began working in his life. It was March 10, 1748, when his ship was almost sunk in a severe storm. John began to feel the reality of God. His life changed slowly. It was awhile before he could give up his occupation as slave ship captain. Eventually, he did, however, as God continued to work on his heart. Newton became an Anglican priest where he became known for his sermons and his songs. His most famous is "Amazing Grace." He wrote it in 1772; interestingly that was the year that Swedenborg died.



[William Wilberforce](#) was in the Rev. Newton's congregation. He was greatly inspired by this man. In the next video clip, "Once I Was Blind But Now I Can See," Newton tells Wilberforce about his own experience.

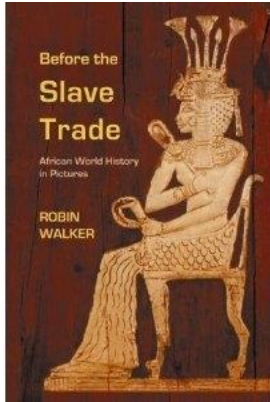
*watch video clip, "Once I Was Blind, But Now I Can See" at the bottom of this page.*

Wilberforce has his own encounter with God, which is shown in the third clip, "You Found God, Sir." Eventually, Wilberforce becomes a key figure in ending the British slave trade.



[Olaudah Equiano](#) is a former slave who writes a powerful story of his life and becomes a leader in the abolition movement in Great Britain.

How did each of these men find God in their lives? Or, as Wilberforce would say, how did God find each of these men? How did they experience the Divine, and how were they transformed by it? Do you connect to any of their experiences?



Where are Swedenborg's ideas in this story? Swedenborg wrote about freedom for all people, and was especially passionate about the spiritual depth of Africans. Many early Swedenborgians were quite active in the abolitionist movement. One such man was Charles Berns Wadstrom. He was an active Swedenborgian and active in the abolitionist movement. There were a number of times that he and Wilberforce worked together on their common cause. In this book at the left, there is a discussion of Wadstrom's testimony in the British Parliament, where Wilberforce was an active member.

For more about Wadstrom and other Swedenborgian abolitionists, see the [additional resources page](#).

#### LET US PRAY

Dear Lord, creator of all, thank you for Your Love in my life. Help me to see Love in my daily life. Clear me of anything which stops me from being your instrument. Help me to be the instrument through which you can express Your Love to others. Thank you, Lord, for the answer to my prayers. AMEN.

Rev. Judith

## *Amazing Grace: Love in Action*

January 22, 2012

### READINGS

#### From the Bible

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

Prayer of David

16 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? 17 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**

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

## *Amazing Grace: Love in Action*



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.

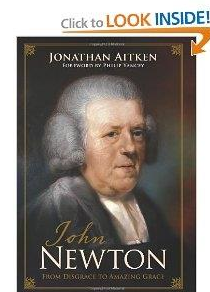
Those of you in London can visit an exhibition on Newton's life through Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>.



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 new biography of Newton was released in 2007: *John Newton: From Disgrace race to Amazing Grace* by Jonathan 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.

In last week's message, we looked at the power of Love that can bring such transformations into anyone's life. This week, our focus is the story of how such an experience can lead from an inner ecstasy to an outer action for good in the world.

Like many conversion experiences, the moment of the encounter with God is felt 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.

Newton and Wilberforce undoubtedly knew about Swedenborg's writings. Many early Swedenborgians were quite active in the abolitionist movement. One such man was Charles Berns Wadstrom. He was an active Swedenborgian and active in the abolitionist movement. There were a number of times that he and Wilberforce worked together on their common cause.

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.

Let us pray.

Inspiration & Prayer for the week of January 21, 2012:

Your inspiration for this week is to go within and ask for the inspiration of God's Love and Direction.

"Thank you, God, for everything in my life both good and bad for these teach me to grow in your Love, Grace and Mercy. Without your Direction and Care my life would be pointless and unmanageable. Give me the strength to seek you in every event and gather the teaching and



inspiration you would have me receive. Bless those that I come in contact with this week and let them be a blessing to me. AMEN."

With Love and Prayers,  
Rev Judith



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

## Happy Birthday, Swedenborg

January 29, 2012

### Readings

#### From the Bible

##### **Old Testament:**

Genesis 1:1, 31 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth....And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. [New International Version.]*

Psalms 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. [New International Version]*

##### **New Testament**

Mark 4: 1-20 *Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.*

*Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"\* Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."*

\*reference to Isaiah 6:9-10 [New International Version]

#### From Swedenborg

Heaven and Hell 88-9 [New Century Edition] Without some grasp of what correspondence is nothing can be known in clear light about the spiritual world or about its inflow into the natural world, nothing at all about what the spiritual is relative to the natural, nothing in clear light about the human spirit that is called "the soul" and how it affects the body inwardly, nothing about our state after death. Because of all this, I need to define it and explain what it is like. This will also pave the way for matters that are to follow.

First, I need to state what correspondence is. The whole natural world is responsive to the spiritual world—the natural world not just in general, but in detail. So whatever arises in the natural world out of the spiritual one is called "something that corresponds." It needs to be realized that the natural world arises from and is sustained in being by the spiritual world, exactly the way an effect relates to its efficient cause. By "the natural world," I mean all that extended reality that is under our sun and that receives its light and warmth from it. All the things that are sustained in being from that source belong to that world. The spiritual world, in contrast, is heaven, and to that world belong all the things that are in the heavens.

## Message

*Happy Birthday, Swedenborg!*



Today is Swedenborg's 324th birthday!

As a special birthday present, the [Center for Swedenborgian Studies](#) has provided the readings, hymns, and sermon for today's worship. Below is a note from Dean Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

*Dear Friends at our Convention Swedenborgian Ministries:*

*We promised to send you an outreach gift to use, if you like, as the central organizing piece for your worship program this January 29th for Swedenborg's birthday.*

*We have taken one of Swedenborg's great teaching ideas as a suggestion for celebrating his birthday this year. We have taken the theme of correspondences and are in this e-mail to you providing a short 6-7 minute video clip by Professor Devin Zuber on Swedenborg and his teaching of correspondence. In addition please use the attached document as you may choose. It contains a brief introduction of Professor Zuber, Bible and Swedenborg readings for this theme, and also hymn suggestions (all from the 1950 Book of Worship) for a service that celebrates correspondences.*

*We send our warmest affections to all our colleagues and friends!*

*Jim Lawrence on behalf of the Board, Staff, and Faculty of the Swedenborgian House of Studies*

**- Professor Devin Zuber**

Dr. Zuber teaches Swedenborgian Studies at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. He is

Assistant Professor of American studies, Literature and Swedenborgian studies. He has a Ph.D from CUNY Graduate Center; an M.A., Queens College, CUNY; a M.Phil., CUNY Graduate Center, and B.A. from Bryn Athyn College.

In celebrating Swedenborg's birthday, he has selected one of the defining ideas for which Swedenborg is known: correspondences. In this short talk, he conveys thoughts about what correspondences are, what they can mean, and how they enrich our understanding of the world in which we live and have our being from God.

Let us pray.

Inspiration & Prayer for the week of January 29, 2012:

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SWEDENBORG!!! In honor of your birthday let us contemplate nature and its correspondence to the Spiritual world. Have you ever hugged a tree and then imagined what it's life

was about? I have and it opened my mind to the metaphor of the Lords caring for us by following its life from a seed to full growth. What happens to it? Does it remind you of anything? What do you experience?

"Lord, our Wisdom Giver dwelling within us, help us to understand the correspondences in today's nature. Keep us in wonder at the beauty of your world. Let us be thankful for all nature and take small spiritual breaks throughout our day to remind us of and sustain us in your Grace. Through this practice let us grow in our

understanding of the correspondence between the natural world and the spiritual world. We are so grateful for the world of nature that we live in. Help us to be better stewards of this world and to strive to live in greater love and wisdom in caring for it. AMEN."

Blessings and Love,

Rev Judith

**Prayer: Talking to God**

**February 5, 2012**

READINGS

from the Bible;

NIV

Matthew 6

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

*"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
10 your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*11 Give us today our daily bread.*

*12 And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*13 And lead us not into temptation,[a]  
but deliver us from the evil one.[b]"*

Footnotes:

Matthew 6:13 The Greek for temptation can also mean testing.

Matthew 6:13 Or from evil; some late manuscripts one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

from Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 2535

*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

### *Prayer: Talking to God*

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.

### **TALKING TO GOD**

Arcana Coelestia (Elliott) n. 2535

*2535. Regarded in itself prayer is talking to God and at the same time some inner view of the things that are being prayed for.*

*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.*

Arcana 2535 [Potts]

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.*

### **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.

True Christian Religion n. 539 [NCE]

*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.*

## **MEDITATION**

Swedenborg 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].*

This kind of meditation was living a solitary life, away the world.

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.<sup>277</sup> mentally taking great Silver wings and carrying gold in her mouth.<sup>277</sup> mentally taking great Pleasure in these sights, I came into my spirit. TC 1, 112*

## **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." (A. E. 325)*

*"The worship of the lips without the worship of the life avails nothing" (A. C. 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." (A. E. 411)*

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

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

Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 6476

*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.*

He wrote more about The Lord's Prayer in his spiritual journal

Spiritual Experiences (Odhner) n. 1790

1790. [VOLUME 2, second part, containing paragraphs 1790 to 3427]

*About the Lord's Prayer*

*When the Lord's prayer is being said, which embraces all heavenly and spiritual things within it, so much can be poured into every least detail that heaven itself is not great enough to contain it all, and this of course depending on the capacity and use of each individual.*

*As one penetrates more and more inwardly, the more plentiful and abundant is the content, and things that are understood in the heavens, are not grasped in the regions below, but are like secrets to them, some only comprehensible by a kind of mental faith, and some ineffable.*

*The more that heavenly mental images, which all come from the Lord, descend lower, or into people of a lower character, the more closed up they appear, so that finally it is as if there were something hard, in which there is little or nothing else but the literal meaning or mental images of the words.*

*As a result I was allowed to find out through the Lord's prayer what souls had been like in their bodily life in regard to religious doctrine, while they were allowed their meaning as it was prayed. 1748, 1 April.*

*A mental image therefore grows, going from bodily elements upwards and inwards, and in fact to an incalculable extent at each level, thus in the inward regions by countless numbers multiplied together; and again in the very inward regions, then likewise in the innermost.*

Here are some thoughts from Rev. Judith on prayer:

Examine, seek, ask, give thanks, these are the things of prayer. Just as meditation is listening to God, Prayer is asking of God. In all things we need to do what Matthew 6:33 says, "SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD....." If we are not guided by God's will for us we are going against what is good and true. We must see with our minds; believe in our hearts what we pray for is possible and of God's will; and leave the results up to God.

"Dear Lord, who dwells within our hearts, keep us focused on love and charity when we pray. Keep us in our hearts in union with you, so that whenever we pray we are doing your will for us. Keep us away from our own selfish and earthly wants when we pray, and out of our will for us and others. We do not know what is good for us and what is good for others when we are out of focus of your will. Help us to pray for our church, our nation, and all your people. Thank you for the Blessings and Love you bestow upon us daily, we are nothing without you." AMEN.

Love,  
Rev. Judith





**Prayer: Mystics and Physicists**

**February 12, 2012**

**Readings**

**from the Bible;**

Psalm 100

A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

*1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*

*2 Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.*

*3 Know that the LORD is God.*

*It is he who made us, and we are his[a];  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

*5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Footnotes:

Psalm 100:3 Or and not we ourselves

**from Swedenborg**

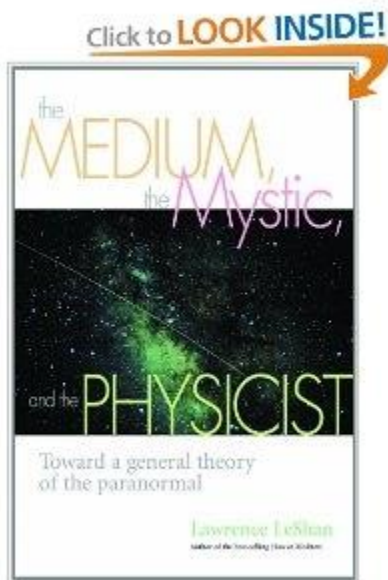
*The true divine essence is love and wisdom. If you gather together everything you know, focus your mind's insight on it, and look through it carefully from some spiritual height to discover what is common to everything, the only conclusion you can draw is that it is love and wisdom. These two are essential to every aspect of our life. DLW #28*

**Message**

*Prayer: Mystics and Physicists*

Lawrence LeShan's book caused a stir when it was published in 1974. It was called: *The Medium, the Mystic, and the Physicist: Toward a General Theory of the Paranormal*. LeShan's central thesis was mind-blowing: the reality being described by Quantum physicists is the same reality that has been described by mystics of all traditions throughout history, and even of "mediums" exploring the paranormal.





Many people found this thesis hard to believe at first, but were convinced by the lists of quotations LeShan gave, asking the reader to indicate what was said by a scientist, and what said by a mystic. Here are two examples. Which of these is the scientist and which is the mystic?

*Every attempt to solve the laws of causation, time and space would be futile because the very attempt would have to be made by taking for granted the existence of these three.*

and [2 options are given so that you have to guess you said it].

*When I, on a certain occasion, asked (Professor Einstein) or (The Lord Buddha) how he found (his theory of relativity) or (Enlightenment) he answered that he found it because he was so strongly convinced of the harmony of the universe.*

The first one is the mystic *Vivikenanda*, and the second one a scientist called *Reichenbach*, talking about Einstein.

These two groups come from different places with different goals; but end up in the same place. We know that Swedenborg incorporated both perspectives of the universe within himself. He said:

*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.*

Perhaps, then, prayer happens when we bring a spiritual perspective to the physical reality of our lives.

There is a Buddhist story that says this differently.



***It is the belief that as one searches more and more deeply into oneself, tearing aside veil after veil of illusion, one comes finally to ATMAN, the true essence of the self. And that as one searches more and more deeply into outside reality, tearing aside veil after veil of illusion, one comes finally to BRAHMAN, the true essence of reality. And that Atman and Brahman are the same.***

So, if both inner reality and outer reality are the same, then what is prayer? Can quantum physics help us understand prayer? Bell's theorem tells us that once subatomic particles have been in contact, they always remain connected. A change in one creates a similar change in the other, no matter how far apart they are. Some physicists believe that these events are not just limited to sub-atomic particles but are part of every-day reality -- including prayer.

Swedenborg's understanding of prayer is similar to what quantum physics is discovering in the laboratory. Prayer involves a real force -- God's inflowing love.

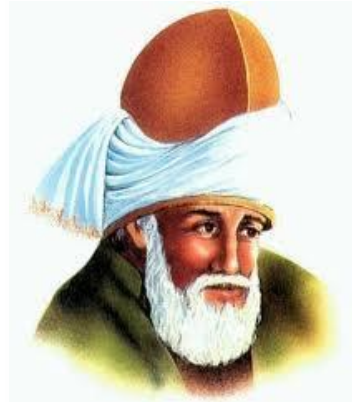
So, it makes sense that prayer can bring about healing, even from a great distance. How do we explain this incident?



One time Lawrence LeShan was asked to give a healing prayer, from a distance, for a man who was extremely ill. The next day the man had miraculously recovered! The doctors were astounded! Perhaps at last there was concrete evidence of healing prayer. There was a problem, however. Leshan had completely forgotten to do the healing! So did he pray unconsciously? Was the man healed by his faith in LeShan's healing? Did God hear and respond to a prayer that no one had prayed?

Another type of prayer, of course, is expressing our love of the Divine. Many of the mystics have written incredible poems/prayers of love to Divine. With Valentine's Day this week, we'll end with two poems of the Sufi poet Rumi:

*My God and My Love:*



*Eyes are at rest, the stars are setting.  
Hushed are the movement of birds in their nests,  
of monsters in the sea, and  
You are the just who knows no change;  
the Equity that does not swerve, the everlasting that never passes away.  
The doors of kings are locked now and guarded by their henchmen, but your door is open to all  
who call upon You.  
My Lord, each lover is now alone with his beloved.  
And I am alone with Thee.*

Another poem of Rumi's

*Since I have heard of the world of Love,  
I've spent my life, my heart  
And my eyes this way.  
I used to think that love  
And beloved are different.  
I know they are the same.*

Let us pray.

Inspiration & Prayer for 2/12/12:

Yuk!! the Blazzzzzzz!. When you are in the throes of the blues what do you do to put yourself on a higher level of thought? Winter is a time of decreased Sunlight, and sometimes like the bear, hibernation. Winter is also the time of introspection. Introspection is good because we look at what we have done; where and what we have not done; and where we would like to be. This is the time that the Lord's Influx shows us where we need let go of the old and work on new and higher things. We go through the process of regeneration.

How grateful I am to have this time of introspection and the Lord's guidance. With His help I see the truth of what has been happening in work , play and in my spiritual growth. God wants us to progress not stagnate. Our progress is measured in the Heart as well as the Brain. Balance being the key to all our growth. What are you doing with the gift of Winter? Where are you in your introspection? Are you in introspection? Where would you like to be? What inspires you the most? Is it music, a positive talk, a success story, a prayer?

Prayer:

God ,who guides our whole lives through our hearts and minds, we give thanks for your Influx and prompting each day. Sometimes it is hard to keep focused on the higher things of life. Help us Lord to focus on you when the blues come our way. When the world's troubles bring us down. Help us to focus on what we can do to empower others and assist in the lives of our family, friends, and community as a whole. Just as Mother Theresa has said, "Help us to do small things with great Love." AMEN.

Happy Love Week!  
Blessings,



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

## **The Angel in the Window**

**February 19, 2012**

### **Readings**

#### **from the Bible;**

New International Version (NIV)

Ephesians 2

Made Alive in Christ

*1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

#### **from Swedenborg**

Apocalypse Revealed (Rogers) n. 73

*73. "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write." (2:1) This symbolically means, to people and concerning people who regard doctrinal truths primarily, and not goods of life.*

*In no. 66 above we showed that the seven churches do not mean seven churches, but the church in its entirety, which in itself is one, but varied in accordance with people's reception. We said as well that these variations may be compared to the various members and organs in an intact body, which nevertheless form a single unit; indeed that they may be compared to the various jewels in a royal crown; and that that is why the seven churches describe the entire New Church in its varieties in what now follows.*

*That the church of Ephesus means people in the church who regard doctrinal truths primarily, and not goods of life, is apparent from the particulars written to it, understood in their spiritual sense.*

*The letter was written to the angel of that church, because the angel means the angelic society corresponding to a church consisting of such people, as indicated in no. 65 above.*

### **Message**

*The Angel in the Window*



Swedenborgian  
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Love, Spirit, Life

Millions of people, from around the world, gathered in front of tv sets on Saturday afternoon to watch the funeral of Whitney Houston. The music director opened the service, saying "We are here to mourn the death of Whitney Houston and celebrate her life." The funeral was broadcast live from her childhood church.

Whitney started singing as a gospel singer in her largely African-American Baptist Church in Newark, NJ. She was raised with deep musical inspiration from the Black gospel tradition, which greatly informed her own style.

Music has played such an incredible role in the history of religion and spirituality. We have had many messages exploring this connection. But an especially important part of the history of our gospel and spiritual music is from the history of African Americans.

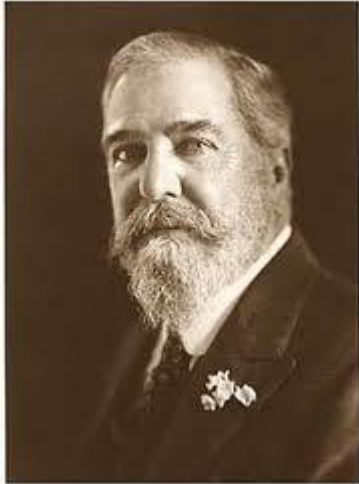
When the slaves arrived from Africa, they brought their musical heritage, and blended it with influences in the new world. Many of our worship music come from the African American experience. It had a profound impact on Whitney and on the music at her funeral.

Although not prominent in the television coverage, the New Hope Baptist Church had beautiful stained glass windows. Stained glass is not as prevalent in North American churches as in Europe because of the Puritan influence.

"Stained glass" refers to glass that has been given a tint from a process that bakes color into the glass. Examples of stained glass have been discovered from the first century B.C. They came into common use with the rise of Christianity. Stained glass windows usually depict stories from the Bible.



Louis Comfort Tiffany is best known for his lamps, but his stained glass business brought

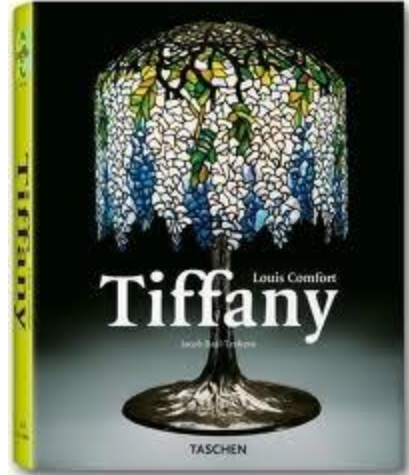


profound changes in the art in late-19th and early-20th centuries.

Louis Comfort Tiffany was the eldest son of Charles Comfort Tiffany, a jewelry and silver merchant who headed Tiffany & Co., the New York City shop.

His first teacher was Swedenborgian painter George Inness. We don't know whether they talked about Swedenborg,

but Inness' theology was embedded in his paintings, and Tiffany certainly took some artistic perspectives from Inness.



*During their heyday, Tiffany windows were prestigious symbols. An average three-by-five-foot piece cost \$700 when Tiffany's own artisans were paid \$3 a day. The large "St. Paul Preaching to the Athenians" memorial window in the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, NY cost a colossal \$5,000 in 1893.*

*Between 1900 and 1910 window production peaked, followed by the public's gradual loss of interest as the novelty diminished. At the same time, Tiffany's control of his companies diminished, effecting quality. Furthermore, the Tiffany style fell into disfavor in the 1910s when tastes grew more academic. Between 1920 and 1930, his work was rejected, eventually leading Tiffany Studios to fall into bankruptcy in 1931 along with the other studios which specialized in similar window styles.*



In 1902, the Swedenborgian Church of Glendale, OH, commissioned Tiffany to do 7 windows based on the 7 churches in Revelation. They presented the gift to the Cincinnati Swedenborgian Church, which built a new church building in 1903. It was a Gothic Revival style with the 8 foot high Tiffany windows. They also brought from their old church the 1860s carved altar furniture made by Henry L. Fry, British-born Cincinnati wood carver who had been a member of the congregation until his death.

The angel windows lived happily in the church building until 1964, when the church was taken over through eminent domain, for a highway. The parishioners were able to purchase the seven windows back from the government. They were scattered and stored in dusty basements and garages.

In 1986, the Swedenborgian Church purchased land in West Chester, PA, for a retreat center to be named "Temenos." Rev. Ernie Martin, the founder and director, suggested purchasing the



windows from the Cincinnati Church.

In 1990, Eric Lloyd Wright, grandson of Frank Lloyd Wright, came to Temenos to design a conference center building that would include the 7 windows. The windows were stored in a barn at Temenos and authenticated as Tiffany windows.

In 1999, Rev. Martin retired from ministry and told the story of the windows to the new minister Rev. Susannah Currie. When she opened the boxes, she was absolutely overwhelmed by their beauty. A church committee decided to form a non-profit foundation In Company with Angels to share the angels with the world. With an anonymous donation they were able to have the windows restored.

They have been displayed at museums around the country.

What did the 7 angels mean to Swedenborg?

*“The 7 churches of Asia represent every person who is receptive to the light of truth that comes from it, in other words, all people who allow God to come into their hearts and who strive to make a daily practice of following this wisdom. The 7 angels represent different kinds of human beings who are working their way to an eternal destiny, living their lives as best they can. Each type has a particular strength and a particular flaw. But these angels also represent the essence of a particular stage of a person’s spiritual development; no matter what angel resonates most with an individual’s personality, they all speak to a part of us at certain times in our spiritual lives. Each window tells a story of the challenges and joys of a particular stage along the path, and describes the actions needed for bringing about a joyful existence during that stage.” P. 20*

## EPHESUS

Ephesus is the first angel in the window. As you gaze at the window, here are some things for your meditation:

Would you like music as you meditate?

Bach: Andante

The primary colors here are white and amber. To Swedenborg, these stand for truth and the "external Divine sphere of the Word."



The golden stone on her forehead represents spiritual goodness.

This window is about seeking after spiritual truth and goodness.

The angel is holding a branch of the "tree of life." Swedenborg says this is the "Lord, as love." When you eat from this tree, you "receive love from the highest source." [Revelation Unveiled, 89].

Ephesus directs us to always return to our first love in order "to express our new wisdom as fully alive and spiritually conscious beings."

Let us pray.

Inspiration and prayer for 2/19/12:

Have you viewed the Tiffany Angel Windows of the Swedenborgian Church in person? They are breath taking! The gift that Tiffany had to express such beauty is awe inspiring. When i saw them i wanted to meditate on them. Another great artist was Whitney Houston. What a great voice and gift she had only to waste her gift by using Alcohol and Drugs. Addiction to anything is so very hard to break, but with the Lords influx we can recognize it and recover. I am thinking about both these artists and the lessons that they prompt in me.

What do they inspire in you?

"Lord of all, dwelling in us, thank you for artists, like Tiffany and Whitney Houston, that show us beauty and love in the art they create. Help us to develop our own artistic gift whether it be baking bread, designing a home, sewing a quilt, or painting a picture. When we focus on your Love and let it shine through our creations, we become your instruments to inspire and light the world, just as Tiffany and Whitney Houston do.

Bless her Lord of Hosts, give her Peace, Mercy, and Your Hearts Desire for her. Please comfort her family, friends and fans, wrapping them in your Love and Protection.

We give thanks for the gifts you give us and the Angels that care for us each day. May your will be done in all we create and in all our lives. AMEN. "

Blessings,  
Rev. Judith

## Angel in the Window, Part 2

February 26, 2012

### Readings

#### from the Bible;

Revelation 1

Prologue

1 *The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*

*Greetings and Doxology*

4 *John,*

*To the seven churches in the province of Asia:*

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits[a] before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

7 *"Look, he is coming with the clouds,"[b]*

*and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him";*

*and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him." [c] So shall it be! Amen.*

8 *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."*

*John's Vision of Christ*

9 *I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."*

12 *I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man,[d] dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

17 *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*



19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels[e] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

## **FROM SWEDENBORG**

True Christian Religion (Chadwick) n. 610

610. *I will add to what I have already said the following point. A person's regeneration does not occur in an instant, but successively from the beginning to the end of his life in the world, and after this it continues and reaches higher perfection. It is because a person is reformed by struggles and victories over the evils of his flesh that the Son of Man says to each of the seven churches, that He will grant gifts to him who overcomes. Thus to the church at Ephesus:*

*To him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life. Rev. 2:7.*

*To the church of the people of Smyrna:*

*He who overcomes will not suffer harm in the second death. Rev. 2:11.*

*To the church in Pergamum:*

*To him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the hidden manna. Rev. 2:17.*

*To the church in Thyatira:*

*To him who overcomes I will grant power over the nations. Rev. 2:26.*

*To the church in Sardis:*

*He who overcomes will be clothed in white raiment. Rev. 3:5.*

*To the church in Philadelphia:*

*Him who overcomes I will make a column in God's temple. Rev. 3:12.*

*To the church of the people of Laodicea:*

*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne. Rev. 3:21.*

*One final point: to the extent that a person is regenerated, that is, in so far as his regeneration advances towards perfection, to that extent he ceases to attribute to himself any good or truth, that is, any charity and faith, but attributes these to the Lord. For the truths that he absorbs one after the other plainly teach that lesson.*

## **Meditation**

### *The Angel in the Window*

*Today's message is designed as a meditation. The hope is to give you an opportunity to have an experience with the windows. Today is the fourth Sunday of the month, where we strive to experience our theme in a way that can help us bring it into our lives. For part of the experience, a link will guide you to the website of "In Company with Angels," where a multi-media experience with the angel windows is available.*





## *Angel Pergamos*

This angel represents a Roman warrior who fights lies and falsities.

The gold color represents love from the Lord.

The white stone represents truths from goodness and love. It is evidence that inner good is united with Divine truth: the marriage of love and wisdom.

They represent loving people who do good works for others. However, they need deeper roots to the Divine, which can come from scripture.



## THE ANGEL SARDIS

Sardis represents those who live "only the external sign of charity and faith." In the letter to Sardis they are challenged to continue to learn the truth with the realization that what they learn is only confirmed within them if they act lovingly from the truth they understand. They are promised that "to those that overcome shall be clothed in white." "In the Word, 'white' is predicated of goods because it draws its origins from the light of the sun."

The white represents truth, and shows that the angel received truth directly from the Lord.

In the right hand is the Book of Life, that promises rewards to all who grow spiritually.

Sardis can represent living by outer forms, but disconnected from inner wisdom. It could indicate a need for deeper connection with the Divine.

Let us pray.

Inspiration and Prayer for 2/26/12:

This week I have been ill, however, I am reading some very special books, "The Life And Teachings Of the Masters of the Far East", by Bayard T. Spalding. In his forward to the series he states, "The Masters accept that Buddha represents the Way to Enlightenment, but they clearly set forth that Christ Is Enlightenment, or a state of consciousness for which we are all seeking---the Christ Light of every individual; therefore, the light of every child that is born into the world."

May the study of the Angel Windows and our contemplation of them bring us closer to that realization and union with our Lord and deep understanding.

"Our Beloved Lord, hear our prayers for understanding and union with you. Show us the meaning of the Angels in the Windows and how they pave the way to you. Let us never forget your light in us. Bless us as we journey together toward Understanding, Union, and Love with each other and You. "

AMEN. With love, Rev. Judith



## Correspondences & Dreams

March 4, 2012

### Readings

#### From the Bible;

New International Version (NIV)  
Psalm 96

- 1 *Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.*
- 2 *Sing to the LORD, praise his name;  
proclaim his salvation day after day.*
- 3 *Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*
  
- 4 *For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;  
he is to be feared above all gods.*
- 5 *For all the gods of the nations are idols,  
but the LORD made the heavens.*
- 6 *Splendor and majesty are before him;  
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.*
  
- 7 *Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.*
- 8 *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
bring an offering and come into his courts.*
- 9 *Worship the LORD in the splendor of his[a] holiness;  
tremble before him, all the earth.*
- 10 *Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."  
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;  
he will judge the peoples with equity.*
  
- 11 *Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;  
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.*
- 12 *Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;  
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.*
- 13 *Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes,  
he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.*

#### From Swedenborg:

Heaven & Hell, #89



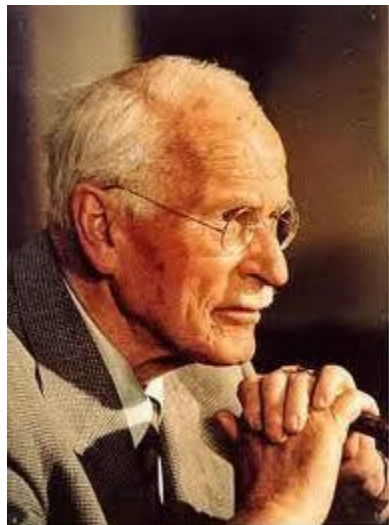
*First, I need to state what correspondence is. The whole natural world is responsive to the spiritual world—the natural world not just in general, but in detail. So whatever arises in the natural world out of the spiritual one is called “something that corresponds.” It needs to be realized that the natural world arises from and is sustained in being by the spiritual world, exactly the way an effect relates to its efficient cause.*

*By “the natural world,” I mean all that extended reality that is under our sun and that receives its light and warmth from it. All the things that are sustained in being from that source belong to that world. The spiritual world, in contrast, is heaven, and to that world belong all the things that are in the heavens.*

## Message

### Correspondences & Dreams

The topic for March is “Listening to God,” and we’re going to explore this theme with a focus on “dreams.” Swedenborg kept a journal of his dreams and his interpretation of them. This material was published after his death as *The Dream Journal*, and shows us how he used his dreams to understand his spiritual calling.



Jung brought us an awareness of the work of how the unconscious communicates in dreams. Many of us believe that Jung was quite influenced by Swedenborg, and some of his perspective on dream interpretation could have been inspired by Swedenborg’s “correspondences.”



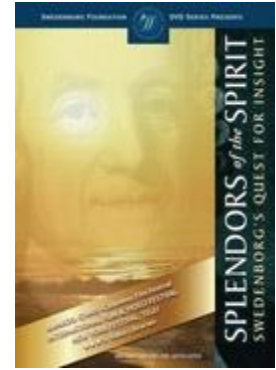
In order to apply our Swedenborgian understandings to dreams, we need to grasp what Swedenborg means by “Correspondence.”

Swedenborg saw separate levels of reality connected by relationships called “correspondences.” All of existence begins with the pure divine, and flows downward – into the heavens, into humans on earth and the animals and plants of the earth. This pure divine keeps flowing down. If we take the very smallest possible thing that exists, even it corresponds to the divine. Everything corresponds to higher levels. That is how both matter and spirit are both real; through correspondence they are all the same.



That is how there is union between humanity and divinity. Swedenborg called it the “Divine human” or the “God-man”.

A good explanation of the concept of “correspondence” is found in a breathtaking DVD on Swedenborg that is from the Swedenborg Foundation. It is called *Splendors of the Spirit*.



When we dream about an angel, the dream may not be literally about an angel. The images could represent something angelic within ourselves, or connect us to the angelic realms.

From this understanding, he developed the concept of “correspondences.

By using correspondences we can achieve ultimate knowing of the soul and psychology.

Swedenborg used correspondences to understand the roots of ancient languages, alchemy, mythology, and other symbolic systems

Symbols often point us towards God.

The Divine is in all living things, and reveals to us the “Divine plan.” There are two arenas where we can see God’s plan at work.

### **The world of Nature –**

Everything in nature portrays something in spirit. It is a mirror, like a lake showing us our moods. Nature is both fragile and strong, as is the human soul.

The beauty of the world shows us the beauty of God.

### **The Bible -**

The opening of Genesis means that God created within each of us spiritual realities, and that life is an interplay between spirit and matter.

We are a microcosm – miniature of the universe. Think about a hologram, where each part contains an image of the whole.

There are three levels of meaning in the Bible:

- A spiritual history of the human race
- Details of what can happen to a human being spiritually
- The spiritual development of Jesus on earth.

This week, focus on the correspondences all around us in nature. Notice possible correspondences in your own dreams.

Let us pray.

Inspiration and Prayer for March 4, 2012:

Yesterday, one of my Native American spiritual teachers died. He was a medicine man and road man for the Native American Church. He lived well, with a good and true heart. He lived Divine Love and Wisdom, although he didn't call it that. He treated everyone as his brother and sister with no divisions. He was an "US" man. He saw how each of us contributed to each other, and valued that contribution in his life. I will miss his loving gentleness and quiet strength. He handled each soul with gentle hands seeing their beauty and strength. To you, Ken Littlefish, I say farewell until we meet again. Thank you for the lessons in listening to Creator through nature, and for the lesson of being present with God in all things. I will miss your voice and your heart.

How present are you today in listening to God? Do you find yourself listening to the world and it's troubles rather than the gentle voice of God? What do you do to change your state? I hug a tree, or sit in nature.....and listen for the voice of God. Sometimes I chant, and sometimes I sit quietly after prayer..... How do you Listen.....?

" Our Beloved Creator help us to hear You in the wind, and in the song of a brook. Show us how to listen to Your Voice in all things. Show us that it is You who Guide us through others. Help us to listen to Your Will for us, and to know that we are never alone in our earthly walk. Keep us focused on the Goods and Truths of life, on the possible rather than the impossible. Help us to know Your Voice in the sounds of the Universe. Thank you for all you give us. Amen"

Love,  
Rev. Judith

## **Dreams: Listening to God**

**March 11, 2012**

### **Readings**

From the Bible;

**5 Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, 6 he said, "Listen to my words:**

**"When a prophet of the LORD is among you,  
I reveal myself to him in visions,  
I speak to him in dreams. Numbers 12:5-6 NIV**

From Swedenborg:

**The men of the Most Ancient Church had the knowledges of true faith by means of revelations, for they conversed with the Lord and with angels, and were also instructed by visions and dreams, which were most delightful and paradisaical to them. AC 125**

**1976. There are three kinds of dreams. The first kind come from the Lord mediately through heaven; such were the prophetic dreams that are treated of in the Word. The second kind come through angelic spirits, especially those who are in front above at the right, where there are paradisaical scenes; from this source the men of the Most Ancient Church had their dreams, which were instructive (see n. 1122). The third kind come through the spirits who are near when man is sleeping, which are likewise significative. But fantastic dreams come from a different source.**

**The sight of the eye exists from interior sight, and for this reason after the death of the body man sees equally as well and even better than when he lived in the body—not indeed worldly and corporeal things, but those of the other life. Those who were blind in the life of the body, see in the other life as well as those who had keen vision. So too when man sleeps, he sees in his dreams as clearly as when awake. AC 994.4**

### **Message**

## **Dreams: Listening to God**

How does God speak to you?

In order to hear God, we need to understand the language in which God speaks. Last week, we considered Swedenborg's view of correspondences. God is flowing into everything. That flow is often called "influx." Everything, therefore, shows us something about God. The things of this world are not God. But they represent something about God – they correspond to something about the Divine.



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When is the Divine most actively using the language of correspondence in communicating with us? Swedenborgian psychologist Wilson Van Dusen says one of the best ways to listen to God is in our dreams. He says that *dreams are the divine commenting on our life*. Van Dusen says *it is curious to me how seldom dreams are used by most spiritual seekers*. Yet, one seeker who definitely used dreams was Swedenborg.

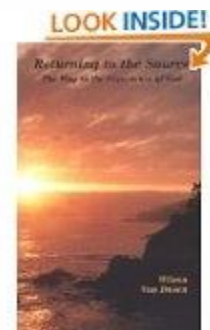
We know dreams were important to Swedenborg, because his own dream journal was a crucial facet of his spiritual journey.

He kept diaries of his travels, and by 1743 was switching from a focus on daily events to dreams. One version of the dream journal has commentary by Wilson Van Dusen. He points out that this was the period in his life when Swedenborg was transitioning from being a scientist to being a spiritual writer.

Van Dusen says that “dreams are in a dramatic language of correspondence.” Therefore, translating that language into understandable form is a major step.

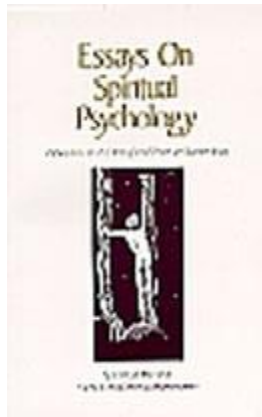
It is the dreamer who can best interpret his/her dreams. Swedenborg not only wrote his dreams, but his interpretation of them.

.Here is a sample from the dream journal with Van Dusen’s commentary:



#16: *It seemed I lay on a mountain with a gulf under it; there were knolls upon it; I lay there and tried to help myself up, holding by a knoll without foothold; a gulf was below. It signifies that I myself wish to help myself from the abyss of hell, which is not possible to be done.*

Van Dusen comments: *I agree with Swedenborg’s interpretation. He has just been through the kind of struggle that creates hell. ... There is an abyss or gulf of hell beneath him. It signifies that he wishes to help himself from the abyss of hell, but he can’t. What mountain is this? It is big, isn’t it, this mountain that he lies on, this lesson he is learning? And the mountain doesn’t have just one rise, but it has knolls or little hills, as this problem he lies on has a number of little hills or lessons. ... I am very impressed that apparently after a relatively brief acquaintance with dreams he is reading this well two centuries before our present abundance of dream studies.”*



Psychologist Carolyn Blackmer says of Swedenborg's dream journal: *Swedenborg took his dreams seriously and became his own interpreting psychoanalyst, a sign of his excellent mental health, to judge from the methods he used and the uncompromising rigor of his interpretations. He did not shrink from the harsh light of unfavorable interpretations, and he used all the devices that modern analysts employ to help their patients understand themselves through their dreams.*

Dreams are a form of influx, and, Van Dusen says, are how we can “catch God in the act of creating.” They are hard to understand, however, as dreams do not speak our language.” Why don't dreams just ‘tell it like it is for us? Asks Wilson Van Dusen. His theory is: “the Dream Maker wants to leave the dreamer free to pay attention or to forget it. For another, the dreamer must approach the very nature of the Dream Maker.”

Overall, Van Dusen says, we need to keep in mind these things about the “Dream Maker.”

- We see the Dream Maker best when we give up all conscious control
- The Dream Maker is very concerned about the real nature and quality of each life
- The Dream Maker comes from a higher perspective that sees our problem and its solution clearly.

Van Dusen tells us: “The one creating your dream knows you better than you do and wishes to represent to you the quality of your life. Because it feels the connection of all things, it easily speaks a language of representations.’

Meditation, like dreams, is best when we are “doing practically nothing but what is given by influx.” Van Dusen says the East tends to use breath or mantra as a focus. In Western Christianity, the Jesus prayer, or passages of scripture are common. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, icons are frequently used. There is also a contemplative Christian tradition which finds God in the quiet and the dark, and is closer to Eastern forms. There is no one right way for everyone, but the Dream Maker will guide us to the right meditation for us when we ask.

Many people talk to God by putting out a question for guidance or strength or wisdom. Answers come in dream messages or in a peaceful calm in meditation that has no words or explanation. It can come as a little intuitive hunch at any time in a day. Often, when going through something difficult or confusing, there is no clarity for quite a while. Then, one morning, one wakes up, and suddenly sees problem and the world from a different perspective.

Van Dusen says, “Enlightenment is an expansion of the little self into its full identity. Afterwards you play your true role in time and become deeply human and unique.” We are all on this journey every day; yet we frequently forget that our best guide books are in our dreams and meditations.

Do you record and study your dreams? Do you quietly observe what happens when you meditate?

If you would like to practice “listening to God,” try to remember your dreams. Take a few minutes of quiet before getting out of bed to recall. Write it down if you can. Return to it periodically during the day, and consider what meaning it seems to have within the context of your day.

So often we complain that God doesn’t talk to us. Actually, God does communicate with us, but we often forget that God communicates in ways that are quite different from how we talk with each other.

Let us pray.

#### Inspiration & Prayer

Are you one of the people that write down your dreams? Dream analysis is a wonderful practice to have. For many years I have studied dream books, interpretation, and now know that results we get in our dreams are a direct result of listening to the wisdom of our Lord. No one is an expert on your dreams. Why? because no one else has the same filters that you do or the same outlook. We each are unique in our perspective because it is our experience that we analyze through. When doing dream work in a group, I like Rev. Jeremy Taylor’s method best, and recommend his books on dreams. He is an Internationally respected teacher on Dreams. Want to get started? Every night set a pen and paper next to your bed, and write down your dreams. It is best if you do not turn on a light. Write them down in the dark, and go back to sleep.

Happy Dreaming!

"Lord, thank you for the influx of your wisdom in our dreams. Help us to know the truth of your Wisdom by guiding our interpretations. Help us to remember that our dreams are unique to us, because you bring them. We give thanks for the clarity you give us, and ask for the grace to follow your guidance always. Let us remember to pray before we sleep for good dreams for ourselves and others. Keep us in gratitude for all you bring to us. AMEM

Love, Rev. Judith

## ***What Dreams May Come***

***March 18, 2012***

### ***Readings***

#### **from the Bible;**

John 14 NIV

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

1"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4You know the way to the place where I am going."

#### **From Swedenborg**

"... what really makes heaven overall and in every specific instance is the divine nature that emanates from the Lord ... [which] is the good intrinsic to love and the truth intrinsic to faith."

[Heaven and Hell #7, 2000]

230 Two things make up our spiritual life: love and faith. Love is the life of our motivation and faith is the life of our understanding. When we love what is good and believe what is true, our life becomes heaven. But when we love what is harmful and believe what is false, our life becomes hell.

231 Loving the Lord and other people makes heaven. Faith makes heaven too, but only so far as we live from these two loves. Since both love and the faith we get from it come from the Lord, you can see that the Lord makes heaven.

232 Each one of us has heaven in us to the extent that we accept love and faith from the Lord. If we accept heaven from the Lord while we live in the world, we will go to heaven when we die.

233 When we accept heaven from the Lord, we have heaven in ourselves, since heaven is actually inside people. The Lord taught this, too: "They will not say, 'Look, here is God's realm!' or 'Look, there it is!' because God's realm is inside you" (Luke 17:21).

234 Heaven is in our inner self--in the motives and thoughts we get from love and faith. From there it goes into our outer self, which does and says things from love and faith. But if it is not in our inner self, it is not in our outer self, either. Pypocrites can say and do good things, but they do not have good motives and thoughts.

235 When we get to the other life, which happens right after death, it is obvious whether or not heaven is in us. This is not obvious while we are in the world, though. In the world, people see our outer self, but not our inner self. In the other life, our inner self shows clearly, since we are then living as a spirit. The Heavenly City. tr. by lee Woofenden.

## ***WHAT DREAMS MAY COME***



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An amazing movie was released in 1998 that sparked many discussions among Swedenborgians: *What*



*Dreams May Come*. 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.

## ***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 master's of the past.

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 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.

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? Are there any ways that you have banished yourself to hell today?

Let us pray.

Inspiration and Prayer from Rev. Judith:

This months focus spiritually is "listening to God". Sometimes for me, God comes in the events and things I am drawn to, it may be a person who has a message for me; it may be a book I open at the book store; it may be a scene from nature. What ever brings me to that moment, it is my job to be aware and listen or see. In all that I do in Heaven and on Earth the choice is mine. How do you listen?

(30 years ago today, I listened and heard God's voice and received His Grace..I have lived Sober ever since. Without that message I would not be your Minister of Prayer today. Thanks be to God!!!!) HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

May you be Blessed with  
the Strength of Heaven,  
the Light of the Sun,  
the Radiance of the Moon,  
the Splendor of Fire,  
the speed of Lightening,  
the Swiftiness of Wind,  
the Depth of the Sea,  
the Stability of the Earth,  
and the Firmness of Rock. Love, Rev. Judith



## Living our Dreams

March 25, 2012

### Readings

from the Bible;

**Matthew 22:**

#### **The Greatest Commandment**

*34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"*

*37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." [c] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [d] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

#### **From Swedenborg**

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. [Divine Providence]*

## Message

*Living Our Dreams*

We've looked at dreams from various perspectives: as message from God, as heaven and hell in "What Dreams May Come." Here is another perspective on dreams:

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.*

Martin Luther King, Jr learned about the nightmares in lack of social justice as a child. He wrote this in his autobiography:

*I remember a trip to a downtown shoe store with Father when I was still small. We had sat down in the first empty seats at the front of the store. A young white clerk came up and murmured politely:*

*"I'll be happy to wait on you if you'll just move to those seats in the rear."*

*Dad immediately retorted, "There's nothing wrong with these seats. We're quite comfortable here."*

"Sorry," said the clerk, "but you'll have to move."

"We'll either buy shoes sitting here," my father retorted, "or we won't buy shoes at all."

*Whereupon he took me by the hand and walked out of the store. This was the first time I had seen Dad so furious. That experience revealed to me at a very early age that my father had not adjusted to the system, and he played a great part in shaping my conscience. I still remember walking down the street beside him as he muttered, "I don't care how long I have to live with this system, I will never accept it."*

In seminary, he found an approach to eradicate social evils.

In the spring of 1950 he heard a lecture by Howard University president Mordecai Johnson on Gandhi [who had been killed in 1948; two years previous]. King wrote in his autobiography:

*His message was so profound and electrifying that I left the meeting and bought a half-dozen books on Gandhi's life and works. Like most people, I had heard of Gandhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. I was particularly moved by his Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform.*

He had thought that love only worked between individuals in conflict. ...*when racial groups and nations were in conflict a more realistic approach seemed necessary. But after reading Gandhi, I saw how utterly mistaken I was.*

This has been a week to remember Martin Luther King's dreams. Many people have been outraged over the shooting death of a young black man – Trayvon Martin -- who was walking down the street by a "neighborhood watch" captain with a gun.

What has upset many people about this event is that it is not an isolated incident, but rather reflects an on-going reality for many Black people in our society.

Charles Howard, U. of Penn. Chaplain, wrote this:

*What I want and what I pray for is a changing of the culture around the millions of African American Trayvons living in the U.S. that allows for them to be thought of as "other," as criminals, as people up to no good. A changing of the culture that allows for people, non law-enforcement people, to carry firearms, use them on a 17-year-old boy, and then hide behind poorly thought out laws. And a changing of the culture where this situation surrounding the death of Trayvon Martin doesn't matter or is irrelevant to so many of my neighbors -- especially my neighbors in the faith community. That indifference hurts just as much as seeing a young man who looked just like I did when I was a teenager die. ...*

*Perhaps most painfully, while I was enrolled in seminary studying for the ministry, I was walking back to campus one evening when a local policeman stopped me, made me put my hands on my head and kneel on the ground because "there had been a lot of car thefts lately and I "looked suspicious."*

*I am Trayvon Martin. And anyone who has been stopped, profiled and questioned because they didn't seem to belong in an area or they looked like they might be planning to do something illegal -- when they were not -- is Trayvon Martin too.*

*That officer who stopped me near my seminary did not believe that I was who I said I was and so he put me in the back of his car and drove me up to campus dormitory. He didn't believe me until I unlocked the door and went inside. No apology. Just silence*

President Obama has said, "If I had a son, he would look like Trayvon."

This situation is forcing many white people to become aware of how often a person of color is seen as "other" instead of "us."

Martin Luther King, Jr., 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. In Thoreau's words, "We can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system." And, "He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with evil."*

Thoreau seems to 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 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)*

Swedenborg said everyone is our neighbor – who strives for love.

*(1.) 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. [DP, 210]*

*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. In Thoreau's words, "We can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system." And, "He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with evil."*

White people need to absorb, at a deep level, that people of color are "us"; not "them." Yet we also need to recognize that the shooter, Mr. Zimmerman, is also "us." We participate in a society in which such events have become commonplace

One week from today, we begin Holy Week. This is a good time to remember that for Swedenborg, the crucifixion has deep meaning for all of us in our lives. We need to remind ourselves to stay aware of the crucifixions that happen every day around us. By not noticing them, we participate in their continuation.

It's a good time to remind ourselves that racism is not limited to the Mr. Zimmerman's or the Sanford, FL, police departments. Racism is a deeply entrenched social problem that we must recognize and resist in order to achieve Swedenborg's New Jerusalem and Martin Luther King's Beloved Community.

*Let us pray.*

*PRAYER FROM JUDITH*

*Inspiration & Prayer for 3/25/12:*

*There are many ways to manifest your dreams; you can set goals for the year and review them daily; you can make a treasure map; you can do affirmations. The most important key is to ask for the Lord's will to be done, "this or something better." We do not know what God's will is for us and this is the best way I know to manifest my dreams. If it is not God's will, we are better off not having it. "Let Go and Let God be God in your Life!"*

*"Thank you Lord for all the good in my life. When I long for something and it isn't your will for me, give me your will. Thank you for the childlike mind of magic that gives me the power to dream, even though it is in your hands to come true. You are my God and I leave my dreams up to you, and my life up to you. Bless me with your presence and your love each day, even if I forget to ask. AMEN."*





## Swedenborg's Easter

April 1, 2012

### Readings

#### from the Bible;

Luke 19

36As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37As 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, 38saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" 39Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." 40He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

#### From Swedenborg

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

## Message

### Swedenborg's Easter

Palm Sunday

Our theme this year is *The Year of the Lord*, and this month will be *Union with the Lord*. This month we'll be exploring Swedenborg's concept of the Easter message, which is about Divine-human union.

Next week – Easter - we'll look at "union" in other mystical traditions. Then for "experience of the doctrine," we'll explore Zen prayer and Christian centering prayer. For an exploration of "uses," we'll look at "union" in the life of Alice Archer Sewell James as shared in Alice Blackmer Skinner's book *Stay By Me, Roses*.

Have you ever watched any of the "[Left Behind](#)" movies or read the books? This evangelical approach to Christianity gives the traditional Christian meaning to Easter. Tim LeHaye says:

*The suffering and death of Jesus were enough to pay the debt of anyone's sin—whatever is needed to make up for everything you've ever said or done wrong. God is so holy that only the death of Jesus, his own perfect Son, could make things right. So great is the power of this enormous act of divine love that no sin is greater than the capacity of this loving gift to cover it. God's very own Son personally invites us to receive forgiveness for our sins and become a part of God's eternal kingdom.*

In this perspective, we are all born into sin, and can only receive eternal life in heaven because Jesus died for our sins. In the most traditional Christian viewpoint, we have to believe this to be true to receive the offered salvation. Because this is primarily about belief, you can accept this belief on your deathbed and be saved. You would need to say a prayer such as this one suggested by LaHaye:

*Father in heaven, I believe that you sent your Son to save me and that Jesus willingly died on the cross for me. I want to become part of your kingdom now and forever, but the things I've done wrong condemn me. I've ignored you. I've been selfish and dishonest and so much more.*

Today, most mainstream Christianity does not take such a fundamentalist approach to Jesus' death and resurrection, but they do advocate some parts of it.

Marcus Borg says: *The most familiar understanding of Jesus' death emphasizes its substitutionary sacrificial nature: he died for the sins of the world. This understanding is part of a larger package; namely, that all of us are sinners. In order for God to forgive us, a substitutionary sacrifice must be offered.*

He goes on to say that this is not the only Christian understanding of the death of Jesus. In fact, it was 1000 years after the crucifixion of Jesus before that concept was fully developed. In Mark's gospel, the substitutionary sacrifice theme is absent altogether.

It is also not Swedenborg's understanding of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Swedenborg saw separate levels of reality connected by relationships called "correspondences." All of existence begins with the pure divine, and flows downward – into the heavens, into humans on earth and the animals and plants of the earth. This pure divine keeps flowing down. If we take the very smallest possible thing that exists, even it corresponds to the divine. Everything corresponds to higher levels. That is how both matter and spirit are both real; through correspondence they are all the same.

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

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

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

Physicist Michael Talbot wrote: *If Emanuel Swedenborg were alive today, it is likely that he would find many aspects of the new physics compatible with his own thought. And he wrote: perhaps the most astonishing foreshadowing of new-physics ideas in Swedenborg's writings are the similarities between his world view and a revolutionary new way of looking at nature known as the 'holographic paradigm.*

Every part of a hologram contains the whole. Jesus was a correspondence of God – and we all are. God was not present in Jesus as something unique in existence, but rather in all of us.

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

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

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

In the traditional Christian perspective, Easter is extremely joyous for those who believe that Jesus died to atone for our sins. It is a celebration of knowing that heaven is our after-life because we accept and believe in this atonement.

However, this traditional perspective on Easter also includes an implicit assumption that anyone who does NOT accept this belief will spend eternity in hell.

This is where our Swedenborgian Christianity takes a radical turn from traditional Christianity. We do not need "vicarious atonement" for our sins. We only need to live the best life we can each day. By doing well day after day, we are preparing our own path to heaven. We ourselves determine our eternal lifestyle. It is based on how we live; not what we believe. Jesus' time on earth helped to bring heavenly love into a stronger position on earth than evil. He taught us love by how he lived his life, and how he died.

So, Swedenborg's Easter is very sacred and joyful. 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 great day to begin to explore our unique eternal place in the universal hologram.

Have a blessed Holy Week.

INSPIRATION AND PRAYER FROM REV. JUDITH

"Union With God"

In a sense we are all unified with God because God dwells within us. His Presence is there, but we are estranged from it by our thoughts, our feelings, and by the noise of the

world. Everything we focus on before God keeps us from knowing Him. Our focus is outside ourselves rather than within; or on what we want rather than what He wants for us. How many of us abide by and do what the Bible instructs to do? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all else shall be added unto you." It also tells us to "Be still and know I am God."

Questions arise from this month's theme, "Union with God". What does it mean to be in union with God? How do we get there? What will it feel like? etc. There are many ways we can get into union with God. The two that I work with are prayer and meditation. During Lent and Holy Week, I work on eliminating those things and habits that keep me from union with the Lord. (Prayer, Forgiveness, and "Let Go, and let God be God in my Life.")

What are the ways you unify with God?

"Our Beloved Lord, help us to make the changes in our lives that keep us in union with You. As we let go of old Ideas, addictions, habits, and old worn out emotions, give us the grace to form new habits of forgiveness, kindness, love, compassion and mercy. Help us in prayer and meditation on Your Word to be more unified with you. Thank you for your tender care all these many years.

Just as You were resurrected, so may we be resurrected in Your Will for us and the Communion with You.

Thank you for the blessings of this day and everyday. AMEN."

May you be blessed each day,

Rev. Judith

## Resurrection with Mystics

April 8, 2012

### Readings

#### From the Bible:

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

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

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

8So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

9Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.

10Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

#### From Swedenborg:

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

## Message

### Resurrection with the Mystics



Psychologist Carl Jung felt he had a quest to find the deep truths of existence, and his dreams led him to the ancient tradition of alchemy. Alchemy was based on the premise that ordinary lead could be transmuted into gold. Jung felt that alchemy was actually about changing the lead of ordinary experience into the gold of the mystical union with God.

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

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

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

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

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

Much of the poetry of mystics throughout history has been about finding this union between divine and human -- sometimes called the "mystical marriage

A poem of Rumi's

*Since I have heard of the world of Love,  
I've spent my life, my heart  
And my eyes this way.  
I used to think that love  
And beloved are different.  
I know they are the same.*

*Teresa of Avila*

MY BELOVED ONE IS MINE  
*I gave myself to Love Divine,  
And lo! My lot so changed is  
That my Beloved One is mine  
And I at last am surely His.*

John of the Cross:

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

Julia Cameron - From *The Artist's Way*:

The heart of creativity is an experience of the mystical union; the heart of the mystical union is an experience of creativity. (Julia Cameron)

**Ever since I saw the Beloved's face,  
its lines have etched themselves on my heart.  
I still nurse the wound of separation within me --  
it has left me broken.**

**Flowing tresses may be a snare and a net:  
those are pagan tresses  
whose lure, like the bulbul, has sprung from the head,  
bogged in the heart.**

**When ego is erased, duality disappears:  
God's lover is himself God.  
This is the heart's only home  
the heart in the lover, the lover in the heart.**

**O Seeker, you make a show of public worship,  
then claim your share of desires.  
The true lover carries within him, in secret,  
the name of God.**

**Strange are the ways of the enlightened ones.  
They weep and laugh in one breath,  
scorn on the lip, grace in the heart,  
profanity on the tongue, praise in the heart.**

**Some say God dwells in the temple,  
others put him in the mosque.  
What do you seek abroad, ignorant one?  
Realize, oh Huma, God is within you.**

**~ Meher Baba, 20th C. Indian saint**

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The concept of "union" in mystical poetry is expressed differently in this poem by William Blake:

*To see the world in a grain of Sand  
The universe in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the Palm of your Hand  
And eternity in an Hour*

George Dole says that that verse by William Blake seems to reflect this statement from Swedenborg:

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



DLW, 77]

Dole was thinking about this concept when he started reading Karl Pribram and David Bohm. 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 ...*

[Sorting Things Out, 77]

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 interference 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 interference 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.*

Holography shows a process over time. Jesus was in a process between two states of being. In his human state on the cross, he felt abandoned by God. But this was followed by the state of union.

*"After this state comes a second one, the state of being in a partnership with God. In this second state, we do basically the same things, but now we do them with God. We no longer need to attribute to God everything good that we intend and do and everything true that we think and say in the same way as we used to, because now this acknowledgment is written on our heart. It is inside everything we do and everything we say. In this same way, ... The Lord glorified his human nature [meaning that he made it divine], in the same way that he regenerates us [meaning that makes us spiritual]."*

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

A Swedenborgian perspective on resurrection is that we are in union with the Divine; humanity and divinity cannot be separated.



It is also about how we are part of the wholeness of each other and all of creation.

Today is about reminding us of these realities.

What does it mean for how we live each day, knowing that we and God are in union? Perhaps we will treat ourselves with more respect, knowing that God is part of who we are. Perhaps we will have greater awareness of the power of our presence in the world, knowing that we are part of God.



Perhaps, too, we will honor all of creation more deeply, knowing that we exist in holographic oneness.

The miracle of Easter is that it is not a miracle. It is a statement about everyday reality: we live in oneness with each other and we are all part of God.

It is so easy for us to forget this basic joy of earthly life. We are part of eternal oneness. It is not about being "saved" from something or for something. It is about claiming the very essence of life itself. We are one. Hallelujah!



## *Life in A Hologram*

*April 15, 2012*

### *Readings*

#### **From the Bible**

"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." (Psalm 65:9-13)

#### **From Swedenborg**

Apocalypse Revealed (Rogers) n. 290

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*

#### *Life in a Hologram*

***To see the world in a grain of Sand  
The universe in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the Palm of your Hand  
And eternity in an Hour***

George Dole says that that verse by William Blake seems to reflect this statement from Swedenborg:

***The Divine is the same in the greatest and the smallest things. [DLW 77]***

Dole was thinking about this concept when he started reading Karl Pribram and David Bohm. 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 ...***

[Sorting Things Out, 77]

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.***

So, what would this look like in real life? What is it like to live a life of uses, of seeing one's self as part of the wholeness of the world? I'd like to suggest Daniel Burnham as a possible example.

Daniel was born in Henderson, N.Y. into an active Swedenborgian family. They moved to Chicago when Daniel was seven. He had hopes of going to Harvard or Yale, but failed both entrance exams. While doing assorted jobs, he discovered a passion for architecture. He became one of the nation's greatest architects during his lifetime.

Burnham was involved in designing many innovative buildings in Chicago. He also helped to plan and build in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and the Philippines.

He may be best known for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The fair was spectacular success, and Burnham became well-known around the world. The Parliament of World Religions was also held in conjunction with the fair, under the leadership of another Swedenborgian, Charles Bonney.



Masonic Temple Building in Chicago

*Court of Honor and Grand Basin — World's Columbian Exposition*



Towards the end of his life, he was commissioned to develop a plan for Chicago. He put together a breath-taking vision of a city that was the use of its citizens. He presented his plan in 1909, and much of the plan was put into effect after his death. This past year, Chicago held a year-long centennial in honor of Burnham and his plan for Chicago.

What made Burnham such a strong example of living by a Swedenborgian holographic concept in the oneness of all things?

Burnham said that his work was inspired by Swedenborg's concept of "uses." He believed that a city or a building should exist for improving the quality of life of people. In Chicago, he saw that the property along the shore of Lake Michigan was being purchased for private enjoyment or by business for industrial gain. He believed that the water and the land belonged to everyone. He fought tirelessly to get the shores into the hands of a commission that made it all into beautiful parks for the enjoyment of all. One can now drive for miles along Lake Shore drive with an unobstructed view of the water, and enjoy beautiful public parks. Burnham knew that many people experienced the divine in nature, and he believed that a city -- and a building -- should have a lot of open space and light. He put many parks in the cities that he designed.

Most of the work he did for cities was done without a fee.

One researcher, Dr. Kristen Schaffer, has discovered that Burnham's original draft of the Chicago Plan contained a radical social agenda in addition to a physical lay-out of the city. Burnham had wanted a city filled with social services to alleviate hunger and homelessness -- and even to provide day care for the children of working parents. What happened to that part of the plan? It somehow disappeared from the final version of the Chicago Plan. It has yet to be implemented.

Burnham radically changed the lives of countless generations of people in Chicago, D.C., the Philippines, and many other places. He has given many of us an opportunity to experience the Divine in even a grain of sand along the shore of Lake Michigan.

Burnham never did well in school, and he flunked college entrance exams. Yet he found

his deepest passion in life, and he followed it. He followed it in a way that allowed thousands of people to experience the divine flow in their buildings, their parks, and their cities.

Every moment of each human life is another opportunity to bring the love and wisdom of uses into the lives of others. It really is the only way of life that makes sense when you consider that I am part of you and you are part of me. By improving the life of one person, we improve life for all.

*Let us pray.*

*PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

*Inspiration and Prayer for 4-15-12:*

*Have you ever asked yourself, " How could I be serving the Lord? All I do is take care of children, bake bread, or sweep floors and clean toilets?" We spend so much time "Doing", and defining ourselves by our Doing. In focusing on the doing we are forgetting to spend time with the Lord in our Renewing, and as a result we get the idea it is us who is in charge of our lives. We lose that Union with Divine Love and Wisdom, and find ourselves floundering and nothing seems to be going right.*

*When we spend time daily "Being" with the Lord and imbibe His Love, it is passed through us to those we serve in our daily lives. A baker who spends part of each day Being with and loving the Lord passes that love through his baking.*

*Khalil Gibran said in his book, "Sand and Foam" : "A love that does not renew itself each day, becomes a habit and in turn a slavery."*

*Are you spending time each day with the Lord and renewing yourself, or are you just in a habit of doing and becoming a slave? Think about it.*

*"Beloved Lord God, we ask for your presence this day and all days so that we may pass your love and renewal through our daily lives in all we do. Help us to renew our Union with you and serve you daily in our work. Keep us focused on your command to us to Love God with all our hearts and Love our brothers as we love ourselves. May we walk in Divine Truth, Love and Wisdom all the days of our lives. And in Union serve you with glad hearts." AMEN*

*Love, Rev. Judith*

**Earth Day, 2012**

**April 22, 2012**

## Readings

### From the Bible:

#### Genesis I

27. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. 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 heavens, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth.

### From Swedenborg:

The Divine is the same in the greatest and the smallest things. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* n.77)

So long as man is spiritual, his dominion proceeds from the external man to the internal .. But when he becomes celestial, and does good from love, then his dominion proceeds from the internal man to the external... [*Heavenly Secrets*, #2]

The Divine fills all space of the universe w/o being bound by space. [*Divine Love and Wisdom*, #69]

## Message

### *Earth Day, 2012*

It was May 1st, 1893: Opening day of the Columbian Exposition. It was to be the most elaborate world's fair ever, and hosted by Chicago. As the gates opened, people streamed in, appreciation the free admission for this first day. There were gasps of amazement as the crowds took in the first sweeping glance of the 640 acre fair. An entire city had been created in Jackson Park! It was a city filled with the scents of flowers instead of the stench of the stock yard. The streets were clear; not filled with garbage. The buildings were aesthetically pleasing, and served useful purposes. The water was clean; the food was plentiful.

It offered a new vision of what kind of community could exist in a city. It became the start of city planning and landscaping, it was a statement about the integration of the environment and social justice.

Swedenborgian Daniel Burnham was the primary architect behind the "White City." The city inspired Burnham's Plan of Chicago about 15 years later.

Researcher Dr. Kristen Schaeffer has discovered that Burnham's draft of the plan contained many ideas about the New Jerusalem that were taken out before the final version.

*In this newly-awakened civic consciousness lies the hope of the regeneration of the American city. The merely animal growth will no longer suffice. Pride in mere numbers or area is seen to*

*be unworthy. The newer ideals comprehend good order and convenience and even beauty. In short, the city is developing within itself a soul.*

*In such a spirit, this report is conceived.*

It is also in such a spirit that we can see the deeper meaning in Earth Day. How? Look again at the Swedenborgian readings for today, and this crucial statement of Swedenborg's:

*The Divine is in the largest and the smallest of things.*

This gives us a theological understanding of Earth Day. God is not just in humans, but in all animals. God is not just in animals, but in plants. God is not just in plants, but in rocks. Everything that exists in our world contains the Divine. To ignore the needs of our earth and our vegetation ignores God.

Daniel Burnham grew up with that concept embedded deep into his soul. He knew that people had to have parks in their city, because they could experience God in the parks. He knew that the shores of Lake Michigan needed to be available to all people, because those shores contained God – and God belongs to everyone.

Burnham knew that God's plan for us was not just heaven after we die, but heaven right here and now in our cities. The health and happiness of all people – and all of nature – is in that plan.

What better way to experience union with the Divine than by honoring the Earth -- this Earth day and every day.

*Let us pray.*

*PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

*You have heard all about conserving our resources and recycling. You have heard about planting trees and preserving habitats. There isn't much that you have not heard about conservation. My question is with all this knowledge how can I best steward my environment? I have decided to take the issue to prayer and ask The Lord what his will is. This way He will direct whatever course is best for the Earth today. What are you going to do to celebrate Earth day?*

*"Lord of all creation dwelling in all things show me how I can best serve our planet. Give me the steps to take to be a better conservator of our planet. Let me respect all nature and give thanks for such a beautiful dwelling place. May the Earth and all it's Creatures be blessed with Peace."*



## ***Union in Action: Swedenborgian Artist***

***April 29, 2012***

### ***Readings***

#### **From the Bible:**

9 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'? 10 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. 11 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. 12 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. 13 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. 14 If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

#### **From Swedenborg:**

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. T.C.

### ***Message***

#### ***Union in Action: A Swedenborgian Artist***

Perhaps artists can show us a pathway to union with the Divine.

Let's explore the work of Swedenborgian artist George Inness [1825-1894], who was one of the Hudson River painters.

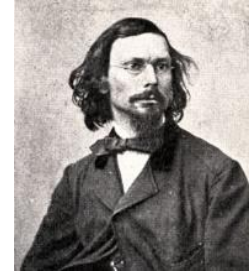
He was born in the Hudson River town of Newburgh, New York, in 1825; the 5th of 13 children. His household included a Baptist, a Methodist, and a Universalist.



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 false or the distance out of key, and in a very matter of fact way would say "Just send it around to the studio to-morrow and I'll put it into shape."*



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].



When Inness painted, he was expressing his love of God, as one might do in a sermon or a prayer. What is it like for you to look deeply at his paintings -- or other art work? Is it, for you, a way to experience union with God?

Let us pray.

This week I have been focused on Psalm 42:1,

" As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you,O God." (NIV).

This passage reminds us that we must seek the "Living Water" from the Lord to create our art. So also must we remember that we are not alone in its creation. It is our Union with God as we create that gives our work the qualities of beauty and inspiration. We are the vehicle through which the Lord works.

So as we focus on the Lord In prayer and meditation, we cannot help but be inspired in the use of our talent.

"Holy One, as we pray and meditate on you, may we be filled with Your Living Water. Give us the focus and the energy to be the vehicle that produces inspirational works. We are endowed with the talent you gave us at birth.

May we give that talent to all serving you. We thank you and praise you for the Living Water you give us each day. May we use it with Truth, Wisdom, and Love for the good of all. AMEN."

With Love,  
Rev. Judith

## ***Acting Justly***

***May 6, 2012***

### ***Readings***

From the Bible:

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the Lord  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?  
7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly[a] with your God.

#### **From Swedenborg:**

For when the good and truth residing with a person have been joined together his will is new and his understanding is new, consequently his life is new. When this is how a person is, Divine worship is present in every deed he performs; for at every point the person now has what is Divine in view, respects and loves it, and in so doing worships it.

[4] The fact that this is the true worship of God is unknown to those who think that all worship consists in acts of adoration and prayer, thus in such things as belong to the mouth and thought, and not in such as belong to deeds flowing from the good of charity and the good of faith. ...

[5] In short, acting in accord with the Lord's commandments constitutes true worship of Him, indeed constitutes true love and true faith, as may also become clear to anyone who stops to consider the matter ...

[6] ... the outward performance of worship without this inner devotion is not worship ...

In Micah,

Shall I come before Jehovah with burnt offerings? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams? He has shown you what is good; and what does Jehovah require of you but to carry out judgment, and to love mercy, and to humble yourself by walking with your God? Micah 6:6-8.

## ***Message***

### ***Acting Justly***

With the start of May, we enter into three months exploring this Bible passage:

*And what does the Lord require of you?*

*To act justly and to love mercy*

*and to walk humbly[a] with your God.*

This is the theme of our annual convention this summer: *What does the Lord require of you?*

The question comes from the passage above from Micah. On *Swedenborgian Community.org*, we'll be exploring the theme in three parts:

May: Acting Justly

June: Loving Mercy

July: Walking Humbly with God

In general, we'll follow our monthly rotation of themes based on *wisdom, love, and uses*.

**WISDOM:** [Weeks one and two]

*Swedenborg's concepts*

*The concepts in other contexts*

**LOVE:** [week three]

*The experience of the concept*

**USES:** [week four]

*Taking the concept into everyday life.*

However this month we'll reverse the two *wisdom* messages. We begin this week looking at the concept of *justice* in the modern-day contexts of May 1st and May 5th. Next week we'll delve more into Swedenborg's understanding of justice.

## MAY 1ST

For many people throughout the world, May Day is a time to honor labor and trade unions. It is called *International Workers' Day* in many places.

In 1864, workers in Chicago began to agitate for an eight-hour day, which seemed like another form of freedom as in the abolition movement.



A law for an eight-hour day was passed in Illinois and was to go into effect May 1, 1867. That day, tens of thousands of Chicago's workers celebrated *en masse* in the streets of Chicago. But on May 2nd, employers ordered their workers to stay the customary 10 or 11 hours. The city erupted in a general strike, but by May 8, employers had won, and workers went back to work with their long hours.

In 1886, the Chicago Central Labor Union again demanded an eight-hour day and held a strike on May 1st. It led to a huge battle between police and workers. On May 4, there was a huge protest rally at Haymarket Square. Thousands of

people were there, and someone threw a bomb at the police, killing one. The police began shooting into the crowd, killing 11 more people.

Many of the wounded were afraid they would be arrested if they tried to get medical attention. A controversial trial of sorts followed, in which 8 were tried for their political beliefs, and eight were hanged. Around the world, people were outraged about the Haymarket incident. It wasn't until 1938 that a law for an eight-hour day was enacted.

In many countries, May 1st is a day to honor workers and to remember the history of the Labor Movement. In North America, labor is honored in September, but May 1st is an important date for many. This year, many people in the "occupy" movement held protests as part of the historical meaning of the date.

This period in the history of Chicago was quite fascinating. We have already talked about the Swedenborgian architect Daniel Burnham who was an up and coming architect in Chicago. Seven years after Haymarket, the Chicago Worlds' Fair would open.

May 5

The holiday of Cinco De Mayo, The 5th Of May, celebrates the victory of the Mexican militia over the French army at The Battle Of Puebla in 1862.



The French army invaded Mexico at the Gulf of Mexico and began to march toward Mexico City, a distance of less than 600 miles. Although American President Abraham Lincoln was sympathetic to Mexico's cause, the U.S. was involved in its own Civil War and he couldn't send troops.

The French army encountered strong resistance near Puebla at the Mexican forts of Loreto and Guadalupe. Led by Mexican General Ignacio Zaragoza Seguín, a Mexican army of 4,500 men were able to defeat the French army of 6,500 soldiers, which stopped the invasion of the country. The victory was a glorious moment for Mexican patriots, which at the time helped to develop a needed sense of national unity, and is the cause for the historical date's celebration.

For the most part, the holiday of Cinco de Mayo is more of a regional holiday in Mexico, celebrated most enthusiastically in the state of Puebla. There is some limited recognition of the holiday throughout the country with different levels of enthusiasm, but it's nothing like that found in Puebla.



*Traditional Mexican dancers Celebrating Cinco de Mayo has become increasingly popular along the U.S.-Mexico border and in parts of the U.S. that have a high population of people with a Mexican heritage. In these areas the holiday is a celebration of Mexican culture, of food, music, beverage and customs unique to Mexico.*

These two celebrations, in some ways, show us justice from a Swedenborgian perspective. To Swedenborg, the most important aspect of justice was to honor the needs of others. It involved putting our personal wishes aside to look at what would best serve others. The concept of workers being able to work and also spend time with family would have made sense to Swedenborg. The idea of a country's independence from outside rule could also be seen to honor those concepts.

What does *justice* mean to you? Where do you see *justice/injustice* in your life and around you?

Next week we'll go into more depth about Swedenborg's writings on the topic.

*PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

*This weeks focus is on union with God through social justice. Gurumayi once said, "Take a broom and sweep your heart!"*

*Believe it or not, this action done in meditation and prayer unifies you with God' s Grace, and opens us to a larger expression of Divine Love and Wisdom. Through this practice we achive clarity and direction. This is an act of social justice on an individual level, and adds to the good in the universe around you. Try it you'll like it!! And so will the others that share your world. ;-)*

*"Dear Lord, keep us close to you each day. Help us to sweep our hearts clean and listen for your quiet voice that guides us to do your will. Show us where our work and love will help those in need. Help us to spend our talent, our time, and our treasure in service to the marginalized and downtrodden. Keep us focused on your presence always. AMEN. "*

*Love,*

*Rev. Judith*

## ***Mothers' Day Justice***

***May 13, 2012***

### ***Readings***

From the Bible:

24 But let justice roll on like a river,  
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

**From Swedenborg:**

134. A person can have a conscience of good and a conscience of justice. A conscience of good is that of the internal man, that of justice is that of the external man. A conscience of good is acting according to the commands of faith out of internal affection, but a conscience of justice is acting according to civil and moral laws out of external affection. Those who have a conscience of good also have a conscience of justice. But those who have only a conscience of justice have the capability of receiving a conscience of good, and they do so when they are taught. NJHD

### ***Message***

#### ***Mother's Day Justice***

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 women to come together from all nations, to recognize what we have in common and to commit to finding peaceful resolutions to conflicts. She issued a Declaration, hoping to gather together women in a congress of action.

She wanted to create a Mothers' Day for Peace.

She wasn't able to implement her idea but she influenced Anna Jarvis, a young Appalachian homemaker who had been working since 1858 to improve sanitation through what she called Mothers' Work Days. She organized women throughout the Civil War to work for better sanitary conditions for both sides, and in 1868 she began work to reconcile Union and Confederate neighbor.

The work of both of these women was instrumental in the creation of our modern Mothers' Day.

But working for peace was not the only accomplishment of Julia Ward Howe. In the aftermath of



the Civil War, she, like many before her, began to see parallels between struggles for legal rights for blacks and the need for legal equality for women. She became active in the woman suffrage movement to gain the vote for women.

She preached often in Unitarian and Universalist churches. Beginning in 1873, she hosted an annual gathering of women ministers, and in the 1870s helped to found the Free Religious Association.

She also became active in the woman's club movement, serving as president of the New England Women's Club from 1871. She helped found the Association for the Advancement of Women (AAW) in 1873, serving as president from 1881.

In 1893, Julia Ward Howe participated in the Chicago Columbian Exposition (World's Fair), including chairing a session and presenting a report on "Moral and Social Reform" at the Congress of Representative Women.

When Julia Ward Howe died in 1910, four thousand people attended her memorial service.

Her life is an inspiring example of "justice" from a Swedenborgian perspective.

To Swedenborg, the Lord is justice. He wrote:

*Because of its nature and origin, and because in and of itself it is purely divine, the Lord's justice could not become part of anyone or produce any salvation any more than the divine life could, which is divine love and divine wisdom. The Lord does come into every one of us bring his love and divine wisdom, but unless we are following the divine design in our lives, that life, although it may indeed be in us, makes no contribution whatever to our salvation. It gives us only the ability to understand what is true and do what is good. TC 96*

*The acts of redemption through which the Lord made himself justice were these: carrying out the Last Judgment, which he did in the spiritual world; separating the evil from the good and the goats from the sheep; driving out of heaven those who had joined the beasts that served the dragon [Revelation 13]; assembling a new heaven of the deserving and a new hell of the undeserving; bringing both heaven and hell back into the divine design; and establishing a new church. These acts were the acts of redemption through which the Lord became justice. Justice is following the divine design in all that one does, and bringing back into the divine design things that have fallen away from that design. Justice is the divine design itself. TC 97*

In 1919, Rev. T.S. Harris wrote an article for the *New Church Life* called "What the Lord Requires." He looked at the importance of "doing justice," and he wrote:

*With the Lord there is no such thing as "retributive justice." God does not revenge injustice and injuries done by evil beings. Those who are evil inflict evil upon those who do evil. The "golden rule" of heaven becomes its opposite with the infernals. In hell, to everyone is done as he has done to others. Justice is to do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you; but "getting even" is retaliation, or "the cruelty of revenge."*

Think about people you know who have lived their lives exhibit doing good to others and living in the divine design. Think of people who bring order when things fall away from the divine design. These people are motherly people. Often, they are mothers.

Consider the motherly actions in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Let us rejoice for all of the motherly acts of justice in our lives every day.

*PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

"Lord of all, bless the mothers of this world with all good things. Give them your hearts desire for them. We thank you for the privilege of being Mothers. Keep us close to you Lord while we are serving our children so that we may know the best way to teach and guide them. May all mothers be blessed this day. AMEN."



## *Justice Live*

*May 20, 2012*

### *Readings*

From the Bible:

#### Mt. 5

38" You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' [g] 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

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

**From Swedenborg:**

*Justice is following the divine design in all that one does, and bringing back into the divine design things that have fallen away from that design. Justice is the divine design itself. TC 97*

## *Message*

### *Justice Live*

This month we are exploring the concept of *justice* from a Swedenborgian perspective, and this week we are looking at how justice can be experienced. The living of justice can be seen through the life of Mahatma Gandhi [1869-1948].

He born and raised in India as a Hindu; the Jain school of Hinduism which regards *ahimsa*, the doctrine of non-injury to any form of life as a basic principle.

He went to England to study law, and while there he read Christian scripture for the first time. He was deeply moved by these words from the Sermon on the Mount:

*"You have heard that it was said, Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right check, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you, and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."* [Mt. 5: 38-42].



For young Gandhi, these words filled him with joy, and helped affirm his interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita* that God teaches non-violence through all of the world's religions. Later in life, he was fond of quoting "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," pointing out that such a philosophy leads to a nation of blind, toothless people!

He was inspired by the words of Tolstoy that "*The Kingdom of God is within.*" He felt that we all had the divine within us, and therefore violence towards another was never justified.

*Satyagraha* is a term at the centre of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence. Gandhi himself explained the term as follows:

*"I coined the word Satyagraha in South Africa in order to give a name to the power with which the Indians there fought for a full 8 years (1906 - 1914)."*

Ghandi said "*satyagraha is as far away from passive resistance as the North Pole is from the South Pole. Passive resistance is the weapon of the weak and, therefore, the application of physical pressure or violence are not ruled out in the efforts to reach its aims. In contrast, Satyagraha is the weapon of the strongest. The use of force of any kind is ruled out. (...) This law of love is nothing other than the love of truth. Without truth there is no love. (...).*"

Swedenborgian writer Wilson Van Dusen has argued that there is a central concept of Swedenborg's writings that is also the essence of Hinduism and Buddhism: namely that there is a Supreme Doctrine; that we are all One, sharing one life from one God. This one life is the focus, the source of all our inspiration, creativity, guidance, and love.

Van Dusen came to this reality from his own meditational experiences, and says that many come to it through the mystical sense that we all together sharing one life. It is a feeling, he says, that can come to one watching the stars twinkle on a dark night.

Although we have no evidence that Swedenborg ever encountered Hinduism, this is also its central core, according to Van Dusen.

Hinduism developed out of an oral tradition which was written down around 2000 BCE. It's central focus is our search for God. We are seen to all be climbing the same mountain; just taking different paths. Hinduism came to see many different gods and goddesses, but they are understood to represent the one God, Brahman.

This is especially true in their sacred writings: Advaita Vedanta. Advaita means not two, but only one God exists. Here is a quotation from the Upanishad's:

*There is only one Self in all creatures.  
The One appears many, just as the moon  
Appears many, reflected in water.*

Amritabindo Upanishad 12.

*He alone is the inmost Self of everyone;  
He alone is worthy of all our love.  
Meditate upon him in all. Those who  
Meditate upon him are dear to all. [Dena Upanishad 4-6].*

These, then are the beliefs that Gandhi grew up with. He came to understand them to mean that the Divine is in all of us; we are all part of the Divine. How can we be violent to each other without also being violent to God? Gandhi would say that is not possible and that we therefore should live the force of love by opposing physical force in the world.

Although Gandhi came to love the Christian religion, he wrote that "*it was impossible for me to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by becoming a Christian.*"

Swedenborg, too, considered himself a Christian, but he spoke out against how others interpreted that religion. He saw it in a way that was similar to Gandhi's Hinduism in believing that there was One Supreme Divine, and that we all share in that identity. Swedenborg and Gandhi both had the courage to speak up about the importance of their own religion being more tolerant and accepting of those who were different. Each saw all the people of the world as their neighbor.

Both Swedenborg and Gandhi believed that justice had to be lived.

Gandhi has a lot to say to us about speaking out against injustice. He was nonviolent; but not non vocal! He spoke out against parts of his religion that he didn't feel were right, and he spoke out about injustices all around him. He countered injustice with a non-violent justice.

If we take this belief into our own lives, and live it out day by day, might that change life for us?

*INSPIRATION AND PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

This week I have been thinking about and focused on Micah 6:8 (Amplified Bible)

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, and, to love kindness and mercy, and to humble yourself yourself and walk humbly with your God?"

What does this mean to You? How could you implement this in your own life? To me to be a servant of the Lord means that you focus on God and Other, not the oneself. Sometimes this requires removing the Log from your own eye in order to remove the splinter from your friends eye, that is a form of social justice.

"Lord, through your love and mercy, give me the insight to remove the log from my own eye, so that I may serve you fully in this world. Keep me in communion with you and keep my ear tuned to the voice of your will. Show me where and with whom you wish me to serve. Give me the power and humility to carry out your plan and speak your message to others. Thank you for your Grace. AMEN."

With Love and Blessings,

Rev. Judith

## *Dying for Justice*

*May 27, 2012*

### *Readings*

From the Bible:

John 14:1, 16-31

1: "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.

16: And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, 17: even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. 18: I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. 19: Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. 20: In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21: He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." 22: Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23: Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24: He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. 25: These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. 26: But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. 28: You heard me say to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. 29: And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe. 30: I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; 31: but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go hence."

**From Swedenborg:**

"He who loves his country and from good will benefits it, in the other life loves the Lord's kingdom; for there the Lord's kingdom is his country."\*

\* AC 6821.

## *Message*

### *Dying for Justice*

We have explored a number of ways that we can "do justice" for the Lord this month.

On this Memorial Day week-end, it seems fitting to consider the many people who have given their lives in a fight for justice.

"Decoration Day" seems to have grown up in many towns around the U.S. after the Civil War by many women's groups in the south who decorated the graves of men who died in the war. It was first officially observed on May 30, 1868, with honor to the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers. After World War I, it became a time to honor soldiers of all wars.

In 1915, inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields," Moina Michael replied with her own poem:

*We cherish too, the Poppy red  
That grows on fields where valor led,  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies.*

She then conceived of an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. She was the first to wear one, and sold poppies to her friends and co-workers with the money going to benefit servicemen in need.

To help revive the true meaning of Memorial Day, the "National Moment of Remembrance" resolution was passed on Dec 2000 which asks that at 3 p.m. local time, for all Americans "To voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a Moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to 'Taps.'"

On Memorial Day, of course, we honor the many throughout history that have gone to war for our country to fight for some aspect of justice to help preserve our freedoms.

Yet, the issue is far more complicated than that. Swedenborg tells us:

*"Wars which have as an end the protection of our country and our Church are not contrary to charity; the end for which they are waged declares whether there is charity in them or not." (T. C. R. 407.)*

How does one determine whether a particular war has a just cause? Many have become conscientious objectors to particular wars and have asked to serve to some other way. Some Swedenborgians have attained this status as a result of their understanding of his writings.

Other issues of justice in war concern how we treat our soldiers and our veterans. Are we attending to their physical and emotional needs?

One of our ministers, Rev. Susan Turley, has raised important questions about how we are addressing the mental health needs of our troops.

Rev. Susan Turley is a chaplain at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs Hospital where she ministers to veterans. Turley became a military mom in despair herself when her son died in Iraq in 2006. Her only child, Army Pfc. Keith Moore, committed suicide just two months after deploying to Iraq. The Army now calculates that for the first time since the Vietnam War, its rate of suicide exceeds that of the general population.

Turley's work with veterans helps her understand what her son went through, but the young men she meets often remind her of Keith. She hopes telling her son's story will help raise awareness about the growing problem of military suicide. Keith seemed to be depressed about their mission and his role. He gave signals of being distressed. If just one person had responded to him, Rev. Turley points out, his life could have been saved. Some days are very hard for her to be at work.

She turns to her Swedenborgian faith to cope with the loss. She is committed to preventing suicide among other military, and tells her story frequently. The military is starting to have more material and training available on suicide prevention.

She does not feel that the Iraq war was a worthy cause to die for. She feels Keith's death can only have redeeming qualities by her responding to it in a way that prevents other suicides. She believes in the afterlife, and that she maintains a relationship with him now – as her angel.

She finds way to bring good out of the tragedy by working to change the way the military works with mental health and for us all to understand the high rates of suicide among soldiers – during and after service.

Perhaps "justice" on Memorial Day is not so much about whether the cause of a particular war was just, but how we use tragedy to make our world more attuned to justice issues on all levels.

At 3 PM local time on Memorial Day, observe a moment of silence for all of those who have died and their friends and family. Pray that we all will work for deeper justice within our military and our society.

#### *INSPIRATION AND PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

*Inspiration & Prayer for 5/27/12:*

*Memorial Day is a Federal National Holiday devoted to honoring the sacrifice of our service men and women who died in battle.*

*Today we honor them with flowers, flags and prayers. Some celebrate this day with picnics and fireworks.....How do you*

*Celebrate this day?*

*War is a terrible event that has impacted all of us around the globe with its violence and sacrifice of fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers. How I am going to celebrate this day is to honor my own family and friends with prayers for Peace.*

*I honor all those who sacrificed themselves so I could have the privilege and freedom to celebrate as I wish. Will you join me in my prayers?*

*"Beloved Father of us all, who dwells within our hearts, we come to you with sad eyes and prayers to care for our fallen ones who died in war protecting our right to worship you as we choose, dissent as we choose, and to peruse life as we will. In honor of them we ask for peace for our planet, peace in our neighborhoods and peace in our homes.*

*We ask that you change our hearts, give us the ability to truly love others, and give mercy to all. Thank you for your Grace this day, thy will be done. AMEN."*

*With Love and Prayers,  
Rev. Judith*



## ***Loving Mercy***

***June 3, 2012***

### ***Readings***

From the Bible:

<sup>6</sup>With what shall I come before the LORD  
and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

<sup>7</sup>Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

<sup>8</sup>He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly<sup>[a]</sup> with your God.

### **From Swedenborg:**

First, though, let me state what Divine Mercy is. Divine Mercy is a pure mercy toward the whole human race with the intent of saving it, and it is constant toward every individual, never withdrawing from anyone. That means that everyone who can be saved is saved. However, no one can be saved except by divine means, the means revealed by the Lord in the Word. Divine means are what we refer to as Divine truths. They teach how we are to live in order to be saved. The Lord uses them to lead us to heaven and to instill heaven's life into us. The Lord does this for everyone; but he cannot instill heaven's life into anyone who does not refrain from evil, since evil bars the way. So to the extent that we do refrain from evil, the Lord in his divine mercy leads us by divine means, from infancy to the end of life in the world and they are after to eternity. This is the divine mercy that I mean. We can therefore see that the Lord's mercy is pure mercy, but not ion mediated; that is, it does not save people whenever it feels like it, no matter how they have lived. [H & H #522 NCE]

## ***Message***

### ***Loving Mercy***

Our focus this month is mercy, as we develop the theme for our annual convention theme: *What Does the Lord Require?*

This is the first Sunday in the month, so we'll look at Swedenborg's perspective on this.

The quotation from Swedenborg cited above gives a solid view of Swedenborg's perspective. Let's look at it in detail.

First, though, let me state what Divine Mercy is. Divine Mercy is a pure mercy toward the whole human race with the intent of saving it, and it is constant toward every individual, never withdrawing from anyone.

## MERCY AS LOVE

In other places, Swedenborg talks about mercy as a form of love. In *Secrets of Heaven* [#3036], he says:

*'And deal mercifully' means an influx of love. This is clear from the consideration that the essence of mercy is love. Love itself is converted into mercy and becomes mercy when anyone in need of help is regarded with love or charity.*

In this quote, he continues with an emphasis on mercy as a form of social action in its external sense:

He goes on to talk about mercy as a form of social action in its external sense:

*Consequently mercy is the expression of love towards those who are needy and wretched. In it's internal sense, it is about love: But here in the internal sense 'mercy' is used to mean love and 'dealing mercifully' an influx of love, since it was an influx from the Lord's Divine itself into His Divine Human.*

## MERCY AS ACTION

His “social action” focus on mercy is developed in another section of *Heavenly Secrets* [#5132]

*'And show, I beg you, mercy to me' means the reception of charity. This is clear from the meaning of 'mercy' as love, dealt with in 3063, 3073, 3120, 5042, in this case love towards the neighbour, which is charity, since the reception of faith is spoken of above in 5130; for on the level of the senses, when these are born again, faith and charity must make one. The reason 'mercy' means charity is that all who have charity have mercy, that is, all who love their neighbour are merciful towards him.*

## MERCY AS SALVATION

That means that everyone who can be saved is saved.

However, no one can be saved except by divine means, the means revealed by the Lord in the Word. Divine means are what we refer to as Divine truths. They teach how we are to live in order to be saved. The Lord uses them to lead us to heaven and to instill heaven's life into us. The Lord does this for everyone; but he cannot instill heaven's life into anyone who does not refrain from evil, since evil bars the way. So to the extent that we do refrain from evil, the Lord in his divine mercy leads us by divine means, from infancy to the end of life in the world and they are after to eternity.

This is an important point to Swedenborg. Here is how he develops the topic in Heaven & Hell [NCE, #524]

If we could be saved by nothing but mercy then everyone would be saved, even the people in hell. In fact, there would not be any hell because the Lord is mercy itself, love itself, goodness itself. So it goes against his essential divine nature to say that all people can be saved directly and that he does not save them. We know from the word that the Lord intends the salvation of all and the damnation of no one.

Swedenborg is making his essential point that salvation is not a matter of the crucifixion of Jesus or the forgiveness of God. It is not “mercy” in the sense that God’s gives us a “free pass” to live a life of evil and then expect to experience heaven. Our salvation – our ticket to heaven – is about living a life of charitable actions to others. Mercy is not just about God giving us mercy; it is about us doing acts of mercy towards others.

H & H 521, portion

*If people have not been taught about heaven, the way to heaven, and the life of heaven for those on earth, they think that acceptance into heaven comes from a pure mercy extended to people of faith, people for whom the Lord intercedes, so that admission depends solely on grace. They therefore think that anyone at all can be saved out of goodwill; and some people even think that this includes the inhabitants of hell.*

*...no one could be saved from mercy unless they had received it by means of a life of good in the world –*

This citation from Divine Providence makes the point with particular clarity:

DP 338 NCE

*Instant salvation by direct mercy is impossible. I have just explained that the work of Divine Providence for our salvation begins at our birth and continues until the end of our life and then goes on to eternity, and that this work is constantly being done out of pure mercy and through means. It follows that there is no such thing as instant salvation or direct mercy.*

This is the divine mercy that I mean. We can therefore see that the Lord's mercy is pure mercy, but not unmediated; that is, it does not save people whenever it feels like it, no matter how they have lived. [H & H #522 NCE]

## MERCY AS WEeping

Swedenborg also makes reference to weeping as a form of mercy, in *Secrets of Heaven*, #5480

*'And wept' means mercy. This is clear from the meaning of 'weeping', when used in reference to the Lord, who is represented here by 'Joseph', as showing mercy. It is well known that weeping is an expression of grief and love; it is consequently an expression of mercy since mercy is love that is grieving. Divine love therefore is called mercy because left by itself the human race is in hell; and when a person recognizes within himself that this is the case he prays for mercy. Since in the internal sense 'weeping' also implies mercy, there are many occasions in the Word when Jehovah or the Lord is spoken of as weeping ....*

He makes the same point in number 6034:

*And wept upon his necks a long while. That this signifies mercy is evident from the signification of "weeping," as being mercy (see n. 5480, 5873, 5927).*

## MERCY AS REGENERATION

Here is an important quote from Secrets of Heaven, #9452

*The Lord regenerates a man from Divine Mercy. This is done from his infancy down to the last of his life in the world, and afterward to eternity. Thus it is from Divine Mercy that the Lord withdraws a man from evils and falsities, and leads him to the truths of faith and goods of love, and afterward keeps him in these. And after this, in Divine Mercy He raises him to Himself in heaven, and makes him happy. All this is what is meant by the Forgiveness of Sins from Mercy. They who believe that sins are forgiven in any other way, are quite mistaken; for it would be the absence of mercy to see a multitude of men in the hells, and not save them, if it could be done in any other way. And yet the Lord is mercy itself, and wills not the death of anyone, but that he may live.*

So, Swedenborg refers to mercy as: *Love, action, salvation, weeping, and regeneration.*

Can you see times in your life when you have shown mercy to others? When someone has shown mercy to you? When God has graced you with mercy?

### *INSPIRATION AND PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

What does the Lord require? Love Mercy....this means what to you? This means to love compassion and kindness to me. The definition is simple, yet very profound if you meditate on it. What does it mean to be compassionate? What is kindness? think about it, meditate on it, what does it mean.....?

"Holy One, creator of all Truth, teach us today to understand your words "Love Mercy". Help us to look deeply at this scripture, understand its meaning and implement it in our lives in a deeper way. Give us the love of Mercy. Thank you for your daily Guidance. We ask for your Blessing on our denomination, our churches and our members. Help us to live your Truth, Love, Mercy, and Wisdom as we serve you in our daily lives. AMEN."

Blessings,  
Rev. Judith

## On Being Merciless

June 10, 2012

### Readings

From the Bible:

Psalm 103 New International Version (NIV)

Psalm 103 Of David.

*1 Praise the Lord, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.*

*2 Praise the Lord, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—*

*3 who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,*

*4 who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,*

*5 who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

*6 The Lord works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.*

*7 He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:*

*8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.*

*9 He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;*

*10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.*

*11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;*

*12 as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

*13 As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;*

*14 for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.*

*15 The life of mortals is like grass,  
they flourish like a flower of the field;*

*16 the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more.*

*17 But from everlasting to everlasting  
the Lord's love is with those who fear him,  
and his righteousness with their children's children —*

*18 with those who keep his covenant  
and remember to obey his precepts.*

*19 The Lord has established his throne in heaven,  
and his kingdom rules over all.*

*20 Praise the Lord, you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,*



who obey his word.  
21 Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts,  
you his servants who do his will.  
22 Praise the Lord, all his works  
everywhere in his dominion.  
Praise the Lord, my soul.

**From Swedenborg:**

*Divine mercy is a pure mercy toward the whole human race with the intent of saving it, and it is constant toward every individual, never withdrawing from anyone.*

## Message

### *On Being Merciless*

How is your relationship with God?

Sally was struggling to answer that question. *I think I avoid a relationship with God. I feel that I've disappointed God in so many ways. I believe that God helped guide me to my ideal job, but I kept messing up and got fired. God brought beautiful children into my life, but I haven't been a very good mother to them. I just keep letting God down, and don't really want to face all my failures by letting God into my life.*

Do you sometimes feel that God is keeping a list of all of your failings, and just reads you that list when you try to get close?

In our Swedenborgian tradition, we do not see God as judgmental and punishing, yet many of us cling to this concept of the Divine.

It is important that we fully open our hearts to what we read in Swedenborg – and in the Bible – about God's mercy.

What is *mercy*?

[Wikipedia](#) says this:

*Mercy (Middle English, from Anglo-French merci, from Medieval Latin merced-, merces, from Latin, "price paid, wages", from merc-, merxi "merchandise") is broad term that refers to benevolence, forgiveness and kindness in a variety of ethical, religious, social and legal contexts.[1][2][3][4]*

We often think of mercy as a quality of the Lord, and as a guideline for how we treat others. We don't often see it as a way to treat ourselves.

Swedenborg has a strong focus on how we behave in the world; there is a social justice component in his writings. For example, Heavenly Secrets [#5132]:

*And show, I beg you, mercy to me' means the reception of charity. This is clear from the meaning of 'mercy' as love, dealt with in 3063, 3073, 3120, 5042, in this case love towards the neighbour, which is charity, since the reception of faith is spoken of above in 5130; for on the level of the senses, when these are born again, faith and charity must make one. The reason 'mercy' means charity is that all who have charity have mercy, that is, all who love their neighbour are merciful towards him.*

Sometimes we put so much focus on this part of Swedenborg's concept of mercy that we forget other parts.

*Divine mercy is a pure mercy toward the whole human race with the intent of saving it, and it is constant toward every individual, never withdrawing from anyone.*

In a modern psychological perspective, we can see how many people struggle to live with an awareness of ever-flowing mercy.

A friend said to Sally: *I think God is very merciful to you. However, you are 'merciless' to yourself.*

That was a revelation to Sally. *I think I am merciless towards myself. I keep putting that on God – thinking that God is always judging and condemning me. But, actually, I am doing that towards myself.*

This is from Heavenly Secrets:

*3063. 'And deal mercifully' means an influx of love. This is clear from the consideration that the essence of mercy is love. Love itself is converted into mercy and becomes mercy when anyone in need of help is regarded with love or charity*

Mercy is also the means by which God guides our regeneration:

*The Lord regenerates a man from Divine Mercy. This is done from his infancy down to the last of his life in the world, and afterward to eternity. Thus it is from Divine Mercy that the Lord withdraws a man from evils and falsities, and leads him to the truths of faith and goods of love, and afterward keeps him in these. And after this, in Divine Mercy He raises him to Himself in heaven, and makes him happy. All this is what is meant by the Forgiveness of Sins from Mercy. They, who believe that sins are forgiven in any other way, are quite mistaken; for it would be the absence of mercy to see a multitude of men in the hells, and not save them, if it could be done in any other way.*

Sally realized that God's mercy was part of her regeneration. She had felt that God guided her to an ideal job, but she "blew" it. She realized now that God saw it as a learning experience. She gained many new skills on that job that led her to good jobs later.

Sally saw many ways that she hadn't been understanding and supportive of her children. But God's regeneration was helping her to see that she had done the best she could at that point in time, and learned from her mistakes. While she tended to sit in despair about her past, the Lord was guiding her into ways of improving her relationships with her children in the present to create a better future.

Today's Psalm can help with that.

We started with the New International version. Sometimes, the Good News Bible gives us another flavor. In this version, "fear" of the Lord is changed to "honor" of the Lord.

### **Psalm 103 (Good News Translation)**

#### **The Love of God**

*Praise the Lord, my soul!*

*All my being, praise his holy name!*

<sup>2</sup> *Praise the Lord, my soul,  
and do not forget how kind he is.*

<sup>3</sup> *He forgives all my sins  
and heals all my diseases.*

<sup>4</sup> *He keeps me from the grave  
and blesses me with love and mercy.*

<sup>5</sup> *He fills my life<sup>lb</sup>*

*with good things,  
so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Lord judges in favor of the oppressed  
and gives them their rights.*

<sup>7</sup> *He revealed his plans to Moses  
and let the people of Israel see his mighty deeds.*

<sup>8</sup> *The Lord is merciful and loving,  
slow to become angry and full of constant love.*

<sup>9</sup> *He does not keep on rebuking;  
he is not angry forever.*

<sup>10</sup> *He does not punish us as we deserve  
or repay us according to our sins and wrongs.*

<sup>11</sup> *As high as the sky is above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who honor him.*

<sup>12</sup> *As far as the east is from the west,  
so far does he remove our sins from us.*

<sup>13</sup> *As a father is kind to his children,  
so the Lord is kind to those who honor him.*

<sup>14</sup> *He knows what we are made of;  
he remembers that we are dust.*

<sup>15</sup> *As for us, our life is like grass.*

*We grow and flourish like a wild flower;*

<sup>16</sup> *then the wind blows on it, and it is gone—*





*no one sees it again.*

<sup>17</sup> *But for those who honor the Lord, his love lasts forever,  
and his goodness endures for all generations*

<sup>18</sup> *of those who are true to his covenant  
and who faithfully obey his commands.*

<sup>19</sup> *The Lord placed his throne in heaven;  
he is king over all.*

<sup>20</sup> *Praise the Lord, you strong and mighty angels,  
who obey his commands,  
who listen to what he says.*

<sup>21</sup> *Praise the Lord, all you heavenly powers,  
you servants of his, who do his will!*

<sup>22</sup> *Praise the Lord, all his creatures*

Are you sometimes merciless to yourself?

If so, try to focus on the mercy of the Lord that is always flowing into you and shaping your regeneration. This could allow you to improve your relationship with God every day.

*PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

"Lord, give us the understanding and the desire to appreciate your mercy in our lives and in all things. Thank you for your Blessings, may we walk our lives with our consciousness focused on you. AMEN."



## **Happy Birthday, New Church!**

**June 17, 2012**

### **Readings**

From the Bible:

" 9- And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he proposed in Christ, 10- to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment.....to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." "10- For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. " Ephesians 1:9,10, 2:10. (NIV)

**From Swedenborg:**

*True Christianity, #772*

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

### **Message**

#### **Happy Birthday, New Church!!**

*[A message that received a lot of interest and appreciation was "Happy Birthday, New Church" in 2010. This is a slightly modified version of that message; to also honor Father's Day.]*

Tom arrived at the neighborhood cafe a few minutes before his friend, Pete, so began perusing the menu. Pete arrived breathless a few moments later.

"Sorry I'm late! The traffic was brutal. What's the special today?"

Tom and Pete had been boyhood friends through grammar and high school. Their careers and family lives took different paths, but they remained close. Once a month, they met for Saturday afternoon lunch to catch up on their lives.

"I don't have a lot of time," Pete said. "I have to get home and mow the lawn for tomorrow's BBQ for Father's Day. The kids will all be coming back for the day!"

Tom smiled. "Even Kim at school in New York?" Pete nodded. "Hey, Dude -- congrats! We'll be doing something in the evening for Father's Day tomorrow. We'll be staying late at church for a celebration."

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

"New Church Day."

"What's that?"

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

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

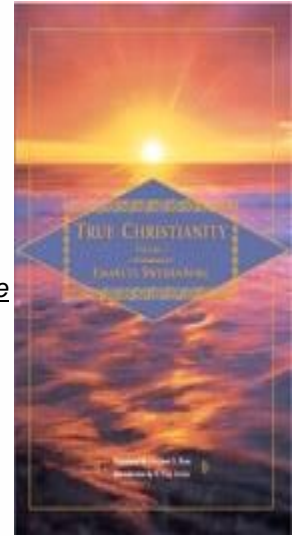
Sandwiches arrived, and the men dug in.

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

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

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

Tom pulled out his Kindle, on which had all of the books of Swedenborg's writing. Pete was impressed. "Hey, a Kindle! I'm hoping my kids are giving me a Kindle Fire tomorrow!"



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

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

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

"Yes, of course that's how it will be," Pete asserted. Tom pulled up another quote on his Kindle.

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

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

"After Swedenborg finished True Christian Religion, he was told that Jesus was sending out the disciples. Jesus was coming into everyone's heart and now is inside for all of us."

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

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

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

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

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

TCR 772

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

...

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

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

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



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

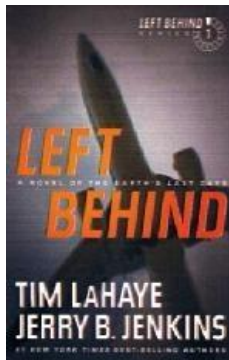
"Yes; it started in heaven. We have a long way to go on earth. But it's part of his concept of the New Jerusalem; heaven on earth; where people are united by how they live; not what they believe."

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

*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples; himself shall be with them, their God. And the nations that are saved shall walk in the light of it; and there shall be no night there. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let them come. And he that wisheth, let him take the water of life freely. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen (Rev. 21:3, 24–25; 22:16–17, 20).*

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

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



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

"Swedenborg's view of the 2nd coming is like receiving the light of the sun. For those who open their hearts to receive this loving light it is like a spring day with flowers blossoming. This is the 2nd coming. It did happen, is happening, and will always be happening. We do not need to believe any particular thing; we only need to open our hearts to the love, and share it with others.....Look, here's an interesting book

on my eBook reader: The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation by Barbara R. Rossing. [New York: Basic Books; a member of the Perseus Book Groups, 2004]. She writes:

*In Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech he says: 'It's alright to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee.' Martin Luther King, Jr.'s concept of the New Jerusalem is similar to Swedenborg's. It is not something for us to dream about in the future; it is something for us to create now in this world. Longing for the New Jerusalem is the theme of many African-American spirituals such as "Gonna put on those golden shoes down by the riverside." Rossing asks where that river side is, and answers her own question: "For slaves, the New Jerusalem vision gave hope for freedom even in this life, for a riverside not just in heaven but experienced also as a very real river in their lives that could be crossed to freedom, here and now. They found a glimpse of the riverside of God in the geography of their place. That crossing between the two worlds is key to God's New Jerusalem for us as well.' [165]. The Second coming is about living NOW and changing our world NOW; not about preparing to be snatched off the earth. Swedenborg is all about living in the here and now; not preparing for some judgment and 2nd coming."*

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



"Well, Tom, that sure is different from my tradition. But it does make sense. I wish you a happy New Church Day on the 19th as well as a happy Father's Day tomorrow!"

Let us pray.

PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH

*This week I have contemplated these Bible passages in celebration of The New Church's Birthday and our up and coming convention What do you experience when you contemplate them?*

*" 9- And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he proposed in Christ, 10- to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment....to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."*

*"10- For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. "*

*Ephesians 1:9,10, 2:10. (NIV)*

*"Dear God, as we look at the founding principles of our church and our up and coming convention, let us serve you with wisdom and love each day keeping in mind Your Will for us and our denomination. Keep us as clear channels for the good of all. Bless each and every member of our Church. Help us to be grateful every day for your guidance and love. With glad and full hearts we say Amen. "*



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

## ***Broken Hearts, Lifted Spirits***

***June 24, 2012***

### ***Readings***

#### **From the Bible:**

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. John 14

#### **From Swedenborg:**

Heaven and Hell (Dole) n. 319

319. People can realize that non-Christians as well as Christians are saved if they know what constitutes heaven in us; for heaven is within us, and people who have heaven within them come into heaven. The heaven within us is our acknowledgment of the Divine and our being led by the Divine. The beginning and foundation of every religion is its acknowledgment of the Divine Being; a religion that does not acknowledge the Divine Being is not a religion at all. The precepts of every religion focus on worship, that is, on how the Divine is to be honored so that we will be acceptable in its sight; and when this fully occupies the mind (or, to the extent that we intend this or love this) we are being led by the Lord.

### ***Message***

This week's message is a very special experience of God's mercy. Rev. Susan Turley has made available to us her DVD, "*Broken Hearts; Lifted Spirits: Mothers of the Fallen Speak Their Truth.*" This is the first time it has been available on the internet.

The DVD is now on three UTube videos.

The DVD has an introduction followed by 4 parts.

The introductory period shows mothers relating experiences of a child's death in the military. Rev. Turley tells the story of her own traumatic grief when her son committed suicide while deployed.

Then the first part is "My Child's Story" which looks at the life journey of some fallen soldiers.

The second part is "My Faith Journey." In this section, "each mother talks about her faith journey, relationship with God and faith community. They pose questions about the nature and the role of God in grief and loss."

The final section is "What Helps?" Here, "the mothers share beliefs, and strategies that have been both helpful and unhelpful for them."



These videos help us look at our faith in light of death -- especially military death. It opens our eyes to the kind of special grief that is part of death by suicide.

As you watch these videos, think about your own experiences with loss and grief. What resources help you at these times? Are there Swedenborgian concepts or quotes that especially comfort you at such times? How has your own faith journey been impacted by loss and grief? What does that tell you about God's mercy?

Let us pray.

*PRAYER FROM Rev. JUDITH*

*Inspiration & Prayer for 6-24-12:*

*When life seems at its worst, what do you do to overcome it? There are guiding steps we can take to overcome any kind of adversity. There are times when our family or friends are dealing with a life of struggle and we do not know how to help them. There are always steps that will help and they are giving it to the Lord, asking for His help and sitting with God in prayer. We need to be recharged each day with God's Love, Wisdom, Mercy, and Charity. As often as you can, Pray throughout the day, and pray for others asking for God's will for you and them. As you travel through the tasks of the weeks ahead remember to Pray for your denomination, your church, your family, your friends, your self, and the departed.*

*"God, thank you for this opportunity to serve you and my community. Keep me from my will and help me do your will. Keep my mind and heart open to others viewpoints and ideas. Direct all of us to Serve You in Loving kindness, Wisdom, and Mercy. Thank you, Lord, for your daily care for us and for your forgiveness when we stray into self-serving actions and thoughts. Keep our hearts and minds focused on you, and Divine Right Action. AMEN."*



## ***The Humble Walk to Freedom***

***July 1, 2012***

### ***Readings***

#### **From the Bible:**

Psalm 145

1 I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

2 Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever.

3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

4 One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

6 The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness.

7 They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

8 The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

9 The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

#### **From Swedenborg:**

Spiritual Experiences (Buss) n. 3786

3786. THAT ONE IS LESS FREE IN PROPORTION AS HE THINKS HIMSELF FREE.

It was perceived and noted from former experience that spirits, while they speak or think through another, infuse largely their cupidities and persuasions into the other spirit, from whence he supposes that he speaks and thinks from himself; for whoever acts from cupidity and persuasion, he thinks he does it from himself and in freedom. From experience also [it was evident] that spirits speaking through another consider that other through whom they speak as nothing. Hence it appears that he who supposes that he thinks and speaks from himself, and is thus in entire freedom, is then in fact in the deepest bondage, and in the eyes of other spirits is as nothing, scarcely even a slave, for they can use him as a mere lifeless instrument. But still spirits are indignant and angry that this should be said, being willing indeed to be deemed by others viler than slaves, provided that they are their own masters in their own eyes wherefore he is in a much better state who perceives that others induce upon him thoughts and discourse.

[4] That it may be further known what it is to be in external things, and what to be in internal things, and that they who are in external things alone cannot conceive what internal things are, and therefore cannot be affected by them (for no one is affected by things of which he has no conception), let us take as an example that in heaven to be least is to be greatest, and that to be humble is to be exalted; and also that to be poor and needy is to be rich and in abundance. They who are in external things alone cannot apprehend these things, for they think that the least cannot possibly be the greatest, nor the humble be

exalted, the poor rich, or the needy in abundance, although in heaven this is precisely how the matter stands. And because they cannot apprehend these things they cannot be affected by them, and when from the bodily and worldly things in which they are, they reflect upon them, they feel an aversion for them. That such things exist in heaven they know not at all, and so long as they are in external things alone they do not desire to know them, nay, they cannot know them. Nevertheless in heaven the man who knows, acknowledges, and believes from the heart-that is, from affection-that he has no power from himself, but that all the power he has is from the Lord, is said to be the least, and yet is the greatest, because he has power from the Lord. The case is the same with the man who is humble, in that he is exalted; for he who is humble, acknowledging and believing from affection that he has no power of himself, no intelligence and wisdom of himself, and no good and truth of himself, is preeminently endowed by the Lord with power, with the intelligence of truth, and with the wisdom of good. It is the same with the poor and needy in respect to their being rich and in abundance; for he is said to be poor and needy who believes from his heart and from affection that he possesses nothing of himself, that he knows nothing and is wise in nothing of himself, and has no power of himself. and has no power of himself. In heaven such a man is rich and has abundance, for the Lord gives him all wealth, insomuch that he is wiser than all others and richer than all others, and dwells in the most magnificent palaces (n. 1116, 1626, 1627), and in the stores of all the riches of heaven.

Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 4459

## Message

### The Humble Walk to Freedom

Today is Canada Day! Because this is Sunday, tomorrow is the official celebration of Canada's birthday. Two days later, on Wednesday, we celebrate Independence Day, the birthday of the United States. Many of us in the General Convention are getting ready for annual convention, which begins in Bridgewater, MA., on Thursday.

The theme of the annual convention this year is "What Does the Lord Require?" We've been preparing for the convention by exploring this question since May. We considered "acting justly," and "loving mercy," and in this monthly will ponder "walking humbly with your God."

Swedenborg wrote:

*let us take as an example that in heaven to be least is to be greatest, and that to be humble is to be exalted; and also that to be poor and needy is to be rich and in abundance. They who are in external things alone cannot apprehend these things, for they think that the least cannot possibly be the greatest, nor the humble be exalted, the poor rich, or the needy in abundance, although in heaven this is precisely how the matter stands.*

Those who live by the internal standards of God can understand that to live in humility on earth is to live in the abundance of heaven. To walk humbly with God is to listen to the inner guidance, and to follow it, no matter how risky the external consequences may be. The "founding fathers" of the United States walked with that kind of humility in trusting God's guidance to take risks in 1776, that we still celebrate today.

Recently, I again enjoyed the delightful and profound musical, 1776, about the events leading to the U.S. Revolution.

I was struck in this movie by how God works through human beings. The concept of independence for the United States is now a sacred concept. In 1776, the issues were confusing and muddled. Decisions were often made by personal egos. Men wrestled with the reality of young men dying on the battlefield, and the deeply contentious question of slavery in the midst of a fight for freedom. It was only through people being willing to walk humbly with their God that they had the courage to start a revolution.

The representatives got irritated with each other in the heat and were discouraged by the letters arriving from George Washington about the deplorable conditions on the battlefield. Here are the words to one song in the musical, "Is Anybody there? Does Anybody Care?" In the play, a letter has just arrived from George Washington. After hearing it, John Adams sings about the loneliness of his position:

*[Lyrics to "Is Anybody There"]*

*Adams:*

*Is anybody there?*

*Does anybody care?*

*Does anybody see what I see?*

*They want to me to quit; they say*

*John, give up the fight*

*Still to England I say*

*Good night, forever, good night!*

*For I have crossed the Rubicon*

*Let the bridge be burned behind me*

*Come what may, come what may*

*Commitment!*

*The croakers all say we'll rue the day*

*There'll be hell to pay in fiery purgatory*

*Through all the gloom, through all the gloom*

*I see the rays of ravishing light and glory!*

*Is anybody there? Does anybody care?*

*Does anybody see what I see?*

*I see fireworks! I see the pageant and*

*Pomp and parade*

*I hear the bells ringing out*

*I hear the cannons roar*

*I see Americans - all Americans*

*Free forever more*



*How quiet, how quiet the chamber is  
How silent, how silent the chamber is*

*Is anybody there? Does anybody care?  
Does anybody see what I see?]*

Swedenborg tells us that God gives free will to humanity. Without it, we could not learn from our experiences. The decision for independence was filled with people wrestling with their free will in a humble walk with God

Our struggles in the present are filled with fear and uncertainty, just as the decisions were in 1776. We don't know the consequences of our free will decisions. All we can do, day by day, is to walk humbly with our God.

In the United States and in Canada, this will be a week of parades, barbeques, and fireworks. Wherever you are, bring your God into the day and walk humbly with that God.

"Holy God, we ask for your guidance each and every day. As we walk in Service to You may we practice Mercy in our actions, Divine Love and Wisdom in our thoughts, and Humility in our Hearts. It is you who take away our transgressions of the past with Forgiveness and it is we who practice living in the "Now" so we may do Your Will. Thank you for Your Blessings and Guidance each day. AMEN"

Rev. Judith

## ***Walking Humbly in the Way of Jesus***

***July 8, 2012***

### ***Readings***

#### **From the Bible:**

#### **Isaiah 25:6-9**

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

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet of aged wine—  
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

<sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;

<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.  
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people's disgrace  
from all the earth.  
The LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup> In that day they will say,

“Surely this is our God;  
we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
This is the LORD, we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

#### **Luke 24:44-53 (New International Version)**

<sup>44</sup> He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

#### **The Ascension of Jesus**

<sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

## Psalm 47

### New International Version (NIV)

- <sup>1</sup>Clap your hands, all you nations;  
shout to God with cries of joy.
- <sup>2</sup>For the LORD Most High is awesome,  
the great King over all the earth.
- <sup>3</sup>He subdued nations under us,  
peoples under our feet.
- <sup>4</sup>He chose our inheritance for us,  
the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.<sup>lb</sup>
- <sup>5</sup>God has ascended amid shouts of joy,  
the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets.
- <sup>6</sup>Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
sing praises to our King, sing praises.
- <sup>7</sup>For God is the King of all the earth;  
sing to him a psalm of praise.
- <sup>8</sup>God reigns over the nations;  
God is seated on his holy throne.
- <sup>9</sup>The nobles of the nations assemble  
as the people of the God of Abraham,  
for the kings<sup>cl</sup> of the earth belong to God;  
he is greatly exalted.

## Message

### *Walking Humbly in the Way of Jesus*

Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete

When Jesus ascended up into heaven, after appearing to his disciples for 30 days, God and Man became one completely and totally. Some of Swedenborg's statements about this process are harder to understand than others. Likewise, some of his statements are easier to understand than are others. In this talk we will look at only some of the many deep statements about this process—the central concept for all theology.

First and this may not be too hard to understand, God had Humanity even before His incarnation. It is from God's Humanity that we, ourselves, have our humanity. So it says in Genesis,

And God said, "Let us make a person in our image, after our likeness" . . . So God created a person in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26, 27).



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But God's Humanity was spiritual and made of spiritual substances. It had not reached all the way down into the ultimates of creation, our natural and physical world. However, God's Humanity did reach the lowest level of creation, or this material world, when God took on flesh in the form of Jesus. So John testifies,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (John 1:1-3, 14).

So Swedenborg, in a very short sentence says that God always had a Humanity, but God's Humanity was only in what Swedenborg calls "first principles."

That God is a Human, and that every angel and spirit is a human from God, is shown in several places in the treatise concerning "Heaven and Hell," and will be more fully shown in the treatises concerning "Angelic Wisdom." But God from the beginning was a Human in first principles, though not in ultimates; yet, after He took on the Human in the world, He also became a Human in ultimates (Doctrine of the Lord, n. 36).

So God's power and His Humanity came down into the ultimates of creation and took on human flesh in Jesus Christ. (As a footnote to this citation, we see that in this book that Swedenborg already had in mind the ideas for the book that became *Divine Love and Wisdom*.) It may not be too hard to understand that God came down to earth and took on human flesh--believing this doctrine is another matter. But then Swedenborg says something that is hard for me to understand.

Swedenborg goes on to say that Jesus put off everything of the humanity that He had from Mary, and put on Divine Humanity in its place. He calls the human that Jesus had from Mary a material human, and the Human that He put on a "substantial" Human. Swedenborg discusses this idea in the light of the Athanasian Creed,

So we read,

He had a Divine essence and a human nature,--the Divine from the Father, and a human nature from the mother; and thence he was equal to the Father as to the Divine, and less than the Father as to the human: also (as the doctrine of the faith which is called the Athanasian Creed teaches) that He did not transmute this human nature from the mother into the Divine essence, nor commix it with it; for the human nature cannot be transmuted into the Divine essence, nor can it be commixed with it. And yet from the creed is our doctrine, that the Divine took on the Human, that is, united itself to it as the soul unites itself to the body, until they were not two, but one person. From this it follows, that He put off the human from the mother, which in itself was like the human of another man, and thus material, and put on the Human from the Father, which in itself was like His Divine, and thus substantial; from which the Human also was made Divine (Doctrine of the Lord n. 35).



I don't understand what a substantial Humanity is, compared with a material one. I looked at the Latin and didn't find much helpful. I did find one interesting thing, though. The Latin word *Materia*, from which is our word "material," has for its root the word *Mater*. *Mater* means "mother" and so one meaning for the Latin word *Materia* would be "maternal." Another meaning is our word, "matter." So Jesus' material body could be both His maternal body, or His material body, or the body made of matter.

The process by which Jesus became one with God the Father was a mutual turning of God to Human and Human to God. God came down into the Human Jesus and the Human Jesus turned toward His Divine origins. So in order for God to fully become one with Jesus, there had to be a mutual movement of Human to God and God to Human. So John 17 reads, "Father glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee," and, "Thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee" (1, 21). God glorifies the Son--which is movement of God to the Human--and the Son glorifies God--which is movement of the Human toward God. Swedenborg comments on this doctrine as follows,

The Lord said these things because the union was reciprocal, of the Divine with the Human, and of the Human with the Divine . . . Thence union was full. It is the same with all union: unless it is reciprocal, it is not full. Such, also, there must be, of the Lord with humans, and of humans with the Lord (Doctrine of the Lord 35).

This brings us to our part in the process of spirituality. As the Humanity of Jesus turned to God, we also need to do our part and turn to God in like fashion. God is always coming to us; God is continually turned to us; God continually wants to enter into relationship with us. We have a part to play in order to make this a reciprocal relationship. We need freely and of our own choice to enter into a relationship with God.

Jesus tells us what our part in this mutual love relationship is. In Luke 24:47 Jesus says, "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations." Forgiveness is perhaps the sweetest message of Christianity. But forgiveness is not cheap grace, a term that the Christian theologian Bonhoeffer used. Forgiveness is not just a free gift. It is the result of a process of character transformation. Forgiveness is the product of repentance. In order to turn to God, we need to turn away from all that would come between God and us. We need to turn away, in other words, from sin.

There is a story from the 1600's that shows us how some Christians view the gift of forgiveness. The story is called *Pilgrim's Progress*. In the Christian display in city hall here in Edmonton, the doctrine I am referring to was written up as representative of Christianity. In city hall, a card stated that Christians believe that we are saved by faith. We see this doctrine in *Pilgrim's Progress*, a story from the 1600's, and this doctrine hasn't changed since.

The story *Pilgrim's Progress* is a story about salvation told from the English Protestant perspective. Almost every Protestant church subscribes to the doctrine of salvation we find in *Pilgrim's Progress*. In this story, the main character is a man called Christian. The story begins with Christian described as wearing rags with a heavy pack on his back,

I saw a man clothed with rags . . . a book in his hand, and a great burden on his back.

As he read, he burst out . . . crying “What shall I do, to be saved? I perceive by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment.”

In this description of Christian we see the old Christian doctrine of original sin. This doctrine teaches that Adam's sin of disobedience to God is passed down all the way from him to each one of us. We inherit Adam's original sin at birth. That original sin is the burden on Christian's back.

But according to Protestant teachings, faith in Jesus will make all our sins fall away. Someone gave me a tract here in Edmonton that said faith in Jesus would cause all my sins to be forgiven--past, present, **and future**. Our hero Christian holds this belief. After describing what heaven is like, he tells us how to enter heaven. He claims that the doctrine of freely given grace, cheap grace, is Biblical.

The Lord, the Governor of that country, hath recorded that [i.e., how to obtain salvation] in this book; the substance of which is, If we be truly willing to have it, he will bestow it upon us freely.

The doctrine of free grace is illustrated in the plot of the book, when Christian sees the cross of Jesus. Upon gazing at it, the pack instantly drops off his back.

Just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till is came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said, with a merry heart, “He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death.” Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him, that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden.

This church sees the process of salvation differently. Notice that in *Pilgrim's Progress*, it is Christ's death that frees Christian of his burden. This form of Christianity sees Christ's crucifixion as a sacrifice that atones for our sins, just like the animals that the Jews sacrificed in the temple were thought to atone for their sins. But in the light of our Bible reading, we see things differently. It is not Christ's death that saves us. Rather it is the power of the risen and glorified Christ that gives us the ability to repent and change our lives. It is when Christ rises from the dead that repentance and forgiveness are preached to all the nations.

Our salvation is a love relationship between God and us. While God comes to us, we need to open our hearts and let Him in. We need to respond to God's invitation to the wedding feast. We do this by actively turning away from the things that would come between us and God. It is just like our relations with friends and lovers here on earth. Sometimes we have to hold our tongue in order to keep our relationship positive. Sometimes we need to sacrifice our own wants to rejoice in the delights our friends have. Sometimes we need to put our own needs second in order to help a friend through a difficult time. In short, sometimes we need to let go of self-interest in order to live in relationship with our friends and lovers.

It is the same with God. We need to put God first, self second. Just as we sacrifice our own ego-driven wants in order to stay in relationship with humans, so we need to put selfishness aside in order to find a loving relationship with God. This is what repentance means. But repentance is a subject for a sermon in and of itself. All we need to know today is that forgiveness is the product of repentance. Forgiveness is not cheap grace. And relationship with God is not with Jesus in agony on the cross. Relationship with God is the blessing of the risen and glorified Lord. Jesus said to his disciples,

"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." . . . Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God (Luke 24: 46-47, 50-53).

Prayer from Rev. Judith:

"Lord, our Beloved, thank you for our heart union with you, and your regeneration of us. Our hearts are grateful for your forgiveness, given to us out of your Love for us. Keep us ever mindful of our Christian walk with you, "to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God."

Keep our hearts united with You, so that we may glorify you in all that we do. AMEN."

**Happy New Year, Swedenborgians!**

**July 15, 2012**

## **Readings**

### **From the Bible:**

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the Lord  
and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly[a] with your God.

### **From Swedenborg:**

#### **Secrets of Heaven, 10143, #5**

For when the good and truth residing with a person have been joined together his will is new and his understanding is new, consequently his life is new. When this is how a person is, Divine worship is present in every deed he performs; for at every point the person now has what is Divine in view, respects and loves it, and in so doing worships it.

[4] The fact that this is the true worship of God is unknown to those who think that all worship consists in acts of adoration and prayer, thus in such things as belong to the mouth and thought, and not in such as belong to deeds flowing from the good of charity and the good of faith. ...

[5] In short, acting in accord with the Lord's commandments constitutes true worship of Him, indeed constitutes true love and true faith, as may also become clear to anyone who stops to consider the matter ...

[6] ... the outward performance of worship without this inner devotion is not worship ...

In Micah,

Shall I come before Jehovah with burnt offerings? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams? He has shown you what is good; and what does Jehovah require of you but to carry out judgment, and to love mercy, and to humble yourself by walking with your God? Micah 6:6-8.

## **Message**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

I was recently talking to a friend of mine from another Christian denomination, and was explaining to her about our worship year. "We just started a new format last year. We have a

theme for the year that starts at our annual convention and goes to the next annual convention – in early July.”

“So,” she said, “it’s like another version of the Christian liturgical year, that begins with Advent [right after Thanksgiving], and goes until the next Advent.”

“Right!” I said. “So we just finished a theme with our Convention, and now are starting on a new worship year.”

“Well, then,” she mused, “Happy New Year!”

I’ve been pondering her comment.

She is absolutely correct; this is a “Happy New Year” for our Swedenborgian liturgical year!

It is, however, a concept foreign to many of our worshippers, so I’d like to provide an overview of how we are worshipping in our on-line community and in many of the churches of General Convention.

### Christian Worship Year

Most Protestant churches use a resource called the Revised Common Lectionary. Wikipedia describes it this way:

*As in its predecessors, readings are prescribed for each Sunday: a passage typically from the Old Testament (including those books sometimes referred to as the Apocrypha), or the Acts of the Apostles; a passage from one of the Psalms; another from either the Epistles or the Book of Revelation; and finally a passage from one of the four Gospels.*

*Also like its predecessors, it runs in three-year cycles; the gospel readings in the first year (Year A) are taken from the Gospel of Matthew, those in the second year (or Year B) from the Gospel of Mark, and in the third year (or Year C) come from the Gospel of Luke. Portions of the Gospel of John are read throughout Eastertide, and are also used for other liturgical seasons including Advent, Christmastide, and Lent where appropriate.*

I often use the Revised Common Lectionary as a resource. It is called The Text This Week, and offers a wealth of sermons, blogs, music, liturgy and more for the texts of a given week.

Our Swedenborgian concept of denominational worship themes just began one year ago, with the Year of the Lord.

Our current seven-year cycle is on our web site at this location.

So, for us, this is New Year’s Eve. We are completing our first year of a denominational worship theme. For us in the web community, we began our theme in January of 2012 rather than with convention of 2011. The reason for that is that we had already developed a theme for the calendar year of 2011 and wanted to complete that theme.

So, let's review our theme since January; the year of the Lord.

The Year of the Lord has included:

*Finding God*

*Talking to God*

*Listening to God*

*Union with God*

*What Does God Require? Acting Justly*

*What Does God Require? Loving Mercy*

*What Does God Require? Walking Humbly*

As you consider our messages of this past seven months, how do you see your relationship with the Divine? How do you find God? Listen to God? Talk to God? When do you feel in union with the Divine? What do you feel that God requires of you? How do you do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God? Who or what is "your" God?

Let us pray.

Inspiration and Prayer for July 15, 2012:

Have you ever wondered when things go wrong in your life "What do I do now?" I have found that I need to do the following:

Accept that this is the way it is supposed to be right now, go into prayer with God, listen for His will for you, and humbly carry it out to the best of your ability.

"Holy Lord, creator of all, help me to walk humbly with you daily. Teach me what I need to know to be your servant. Keep me under your wing and in your will so that I am in constant communion with you. Thank you for my life, thank you for all the lessons of my life. May I be a blessing to everyone I meet, and may they be a blessing to me. AMEN"

With love, Rev. Judith

*Is It God's Will?*

*July 22, 2012*

**Readings**

**From the Bible**

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust."

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

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

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

<sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.

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

<sup>8</sup> You will only observe with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.

<sup>9</sup> If you say, "The LORD is my refuge,"  
and you make the Most High your dwelling,

<sup>10</sup> no harm will overtake you,  
no disaster will come near your tent.

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

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

<sup>13</sup> You will tread on the lion and the cobra;  
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

<sup>14</sup> "Because he l

<sup>[b]</sup> loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;  
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

<sup>15</sup> He will call on me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will deliver him and honor him.

<sup>16</sup> With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation. "

**From Swedenborg:**

234. Laws of Permission Are Also Laws of Divine Providence

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

## Message

Is It God's Will?

I was watching TV this week when I saw an interview with George Zimmerman, the man charged with killing Treyvon Martin last February. When asked about the incident, he said that [I quote CNN] *...he can't now second-guess what happened, adding, "I feel it was all God's plan.*

I almost jumped out of my seat to scream at the TV set. *Is this some new kind of legal defense? Are we going to start asking juries for verdicts of "not guilty by reason of God's will"?*

This theology could be taken to an outrageous extreme after the tragedy in a movie theater early Friday morning. Would someone seriously argue that God had a plan for certain people to die that night, so that James Holmes' mass murder in a crowded theater was a fulfillment God's will? Many of us would consider that an insane theology that posited a God who is crazy or malicious – or both.

That certainly was not the God Swedenborg wrote about.

The situation and issues remind me of the shooting in Arizona last year when Rep. Gabby Gifford was shot in the head, and some people were killed. We explored that situation by turning to a significant book released by The Swedenborg Foundation last year: [\*Why Does God Let It Happen?\*](#) by Bruce Henderson. This award-winning book incorporates many of the insights of the ground-breaking book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Henderson's book, however, is written from a Swedenborgian perspective.

In his introduction, Henderson gives us four concepts are fundamental to understanding Swedenborg's view of "God's will":

- 1. God is all-powerful and in total control. He never abandons us. But he does allow things that are contrary to his will, for the sake of our freedom, because our freedom is fundamental to his love.*
- 2. What God allows but does not will is called "permission" by Swedenborg. Understanding this concept helps to answer the question, "Why?"*
- 3. If the tragedy that happens in our lives is the permission, then providence is what happens afterward. It is the way God's love heals and it always leads to good.*



4. *What we see in this natural or material world is limited by space and time. It's temporal. God sees everything in a spiritual context—not only how our lives are affected here and now, but the impact and repercussions to eternity.*

He adds: *God's providence is governed by fixed spiritual laws. It is not arbitrary, but clear and consistent within a transcendent spiritual context.*

It is hard to understand why God allows tragedy. Henderson writes:

*Without the freedom to make mistakes that may lead to suffering in our own lives and the lives of others, we would be reduced to automatons. The same principle works on a spiritual level. If God were to meddle in our lives and change the course of history to preserve our own narrow sense of order and justice, where would he stop? God cannot pick and choose. His laws—and his love—must be absolute and consistent.*

When I was a student at the Swedenborg School of Religion, one of my professors was the Swedenborgian scholar Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven. He wrote:

*Evil includes everything that flows from the hells, or comes about under hellish influences. Murder is evil, but the desire for murder; the intention to commit murder ... is sin.*

So Swedenborg would see the shooting of people in a movie theater as more than evil; it was intentional sin. Kirven goes on to say:

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

Understanding Swedenborg's concept of free will can help us cope with tragedy. Rabbi Kushner struggled with why his three-year-old son should die of a tragic disease. People tried to reassure him that "it was God's will." But the Rabbi found that to be an appalling theology. Henderson writes:

*We can wonder, with Rabbi Kushner, why "the wrong people" get sick or hurt, or die young. We can agonize with him over the "deep, aching sense of unfairness" over his son's terminal disease. As people who are trying to do what is right in God's sight—living a religiously committed life—we would be tempted to ask the same question: If God truly is loving and fair, "How could he do this to me?" And not only how could he do this to "good parents," but how could he do this to an innocent, three-year-old child? ...*

*Rabbi Kushner has articulated the questions so well for so many people. He understands that God does not cause the bad things that happen to us, and that God does not sit on his throne, determining which of us will suffer misfortunes and which will be spared. But he does stand always ready to help, comfort, and lead. "The God I believe in," Kushner wrote, "does not send us the problem; he gives us the strength to cope with the problem."*

So, what can we take from Swedenborg in times of great tragedy-- personally or in our society? When we suffer, God suffers with us. Evil is not God's will, but freedom of choice is

God's will, since that is the only way we can grow into union with the Divine. In times of tragedy, it does not help to blame God for causing it. But it does help to support others in their suffering. It helps to reach out for others in our own pain. We were created to be social beings, in relationships with others.

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

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

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

Was it God's will that Trevyon Martin die by gunshot last February? Was it God's will for 12 to die and 70 to be wounded on Thursday night in a theater in Aurora, Colorado?

Swedenborg tells us that tragedy is never God's will. But we are not helpless victims in a world of random violence. Ultimately, the healing journey for all of us is through our loving actions and caring relationships.

Central to Swedenborg is that we can experience the Divine through our relationships with each other. Every loving action moves us closer to the New Jerusalem where we live in peace guided by God's will. God does have a will for all of us, that we love each other as God loves us and that we support each other through life's journey. Anything else is NOT God's will.

Let us pray:

Lord, When I'm tired, bring me inspiration and rest; When I'm stressed and resentful, bring me calm and acceptance; When I am confused and chaotic bring me focus and clarity; when I am lonely and lost; bring me companions and love. Thank you Lord for your loving mercy and direction, let me turn to you always in all times both good and bad. I know you are ever with me, will direct my way with your sweet quiet voice, and light my path with your love. AMEN.

Rev. Judith

## **A God Blog on the Aurora Massacre**

**July 29, 2012**

### **Readings**

From the Bible

Psalm 54 New International Version (NIV)

Psalm 54[a] For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A maskil[b] of David. When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"

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

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

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

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

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

*6 I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;  
I will praise your name, Lord, for it is good.*

*7 You have delivered me from all my troubles,  
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.*

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

From Swedenborg:

Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 2535 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

After the massacre in Aurora, Colorado, the CNN belief.net posed this question: "Where was God in Aurora?" They received more than 10,000 responses! They ranged through many religious traditions, as well as concepts that God doesn't exist.

CNN wrote: "In short, God was in complete control, exercising His will," wrote @PastorRileyF, who leads a church in Bethune, Colorado. That riled Jockey, who tweeted, "If that was God's will, God is definitely not deserving of my worship." @TheTrivia also took issue with the Colorado pastor: "I'm going to respectfully disagree with you Pastor. God gives free will to man, but it wasn't his will that they die."

Here is CNN's summary of the 7 most common answers to the question:

1. There is no God.
2. Don't blame God; blame Satan.
3. Don't blame God; blame us.
4. God was behind the massacre, and it was just.
5. God was present at the massacre but with the victims, not the perpetrator.
6. Which God? *After all, the problem of evil in a world ruled by a sovereign and good God only presents itself if you posit one personal God who is both good and all-powerful.*
7. Who knows? It's a mystery.

To read CNN's complete report on the blog responses, go to [THIS LINK](#).

Which of these seven positions is closest to the ideas of Emanuel Swedenborg? I would say that none of these quite captures the Swedenborgian perspective on free will.

In this book, *Why Does God Let It Happen*. Bruce Henderson gives us an understanding of tragedy and free will from a Swedenborgian perspective.

Here are the five laws of Swedenborg on free will as explained by Henderson:

*The first law is that God allows evil to exist for the sake of our freedom. We must be in a state of equilibrium—between good and evil, heaven and hell—to be free to choose the quality of our lives. Without that freedom, we would not feel life to be our own.*

*The second law is that we must be free to act from our own will, as long as we are making rational choices. Swedenborg says that people cannot be reformed if they are in states of fear,*

*disease, insanity, or ignorance, when they aren't able to make informed, rational decisions. But as long as we are of sound mind and body, we must be free to choose—even if what we choose is not what God would want for us.*

*The third law is that we should not be compelled to believe in God, in his providence, or in anything, because compulsion takes away freedom. Puppets and robots don't have freedom. Wars have been fought to suppress freedom or to win it, including the freedom to believe as we choose and live accordingly. No one wants to be coerced. God wants for us to make good choices, but he will not—cannot—force us to do so. God's will is that each and every one of us gets to heaven by making good choices, by actually choosing heaven in the way we lead our lives. But he will leave people free to reject him, to embrace evil and to choose hell.*

*The fourth law is that for us to be truly free, we must be able to see and recognize evil in order to reject it. This is the challenge of freedom. Our culture is a smorgasbord of good and bad choices. We know what it's like to be tempted, but we also know what the healthy choices are. We know what it is to live with the good and bad consequences of choices.*

*The fifth law is that the operation of divine providence should never be evident to us, but that we should always know that it is working in our lives. Imagine if you could know how God was leading you. You would feel your freedom was threatened and probably would want to rebel, especially if God was trying to lead you out of a destructive habit while you were still enjoying it and not ready to give it up.*

*[HENDERSON, BRUCE (2010-06-01). WHY DOES GOD LET IT HAPPEN? (Kindle Locations 514-518). Chicago Distribution. Kindle Edition.]*

I find Swedenborg's view of free will reassuring. God does not want tragedy to take place, but God allows free will for all human beings, and that means that some humans will choose to do evil deeds. God will not interfere with free will.

That still leaves important questions for us to ponder. I have a question about Swedenborg and free will for us to consider. I've started a blog for us -- at the bottom of this page -- to share our ideas with each other.

Where does prayer fit into this? One victim/survivor from Aurora said that he believed he survived because he prayed to God during the massacre. However, one commentor on TV pointed out that some of those who died undoubtedly also prayed. How do we make sense of God's responses -- or lack of responses -- to our prayers?

Let us pray.

"Beloved Lord, we are in pain. Our hearts are broken by this violent act, and we do not know what to do. Comfort us, keep us close to you, hear our weeping, give us the will to go on, heal our hearts, show us the way. Bless us with your peace, and shower us with your love. We thank you, Lord, we thank you. AMEN"

With Love and Prayers, Rev. Judith

## *A Glimpse of Heaven*

*August 5, 2012*

### *Readings*

From the Bible

Matthew 16:19 New International Version (NIV)

19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be[a] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be[b] loosed in heaven."

Footnotes: [Matthew 16:19](#) Or will have been [Matthew 16:19](#) Or will have been

From Swedenborg

[Heaven and Hell]

445. When the body is no longer able to perform the bodily functions in the natural world that correspond to the spirit's thoughts and affections, which the spirit has from the spiritual world, man is said to die. This takes place when the respiration of the lungs and the beatings of the heart cease. But the man does not die; he is merely separated from the bodily part that was of use to him in the world, while the man himself continues to live. It is said that the man himself continues to live since man is not a man because of his body but because of his spirit, for it is the spirit that thinks in man, and thought with affection is what constitutes man. Evidently, then, the death of man is merely his passing from one world into another. And this is why in the Word in its internal sense "death" signifies resurrection and continuation of life.

### *Message*

#### A Glimpse of Heaven

Recently, 20/20 did a two hour special called [Heaven: Where is it and How do you Get there?](#) One woman who unexpectedly died for four minutes after giving birth, said :death "was the best experience of her life." She said she had a "glimpse of heaven" and instantly knew that life was eternal.

[Dr. Raymond Moody](#) is perhaps the best know researcher on Near Death Experiences. Moody has a doctorate in philosophy, in psychology, and an M.D. He wrote a book in 1975 called "Life After Life," that gave accounts of patients of his who had clinically died, yet returned to tell a story of a life after death. The term "near death experience" came into use at that time. Moody's research into the subject included reading works of Emanuel Swedenborg because Swedenborg's accounts of his visits to heaven are similar to what Moody was seeing in NDE's.

One of the most respected organizations researching NDE's is the International Association of Near-Death Studies [IANDS]. For many years, they have been collecting stories of people's accounts of dying and then returning.

Here is one account from their archives:

*Experience entered into the IANDS Archives February 5, 2002:*

*I was with my partner at the time and we had been going through difficulties. I had felt this strong sense of loss and I felt that something was calling me. I then ended up taking chloroform. I could feel the effects straight away, this creeping relaxing feeling and the sensation of me slipping out of something that felt like prison. I could remember being in the hospital on the ceiling watching all these doctors and nurses attending to me. I could also hear my mum and brother talking to me asking me why this had happened. It felt warm and radiant like some one was with me at this time and they were conveying a feeling of peace and love that was something I had never ever felt before.*

*In no time I was traveling down this tunnel with beings on either side. It felt like I knew them all and they were talking to me asking me how I am and what had been going on in my life. They also showed me something that I could not recall but it felt familiar. After a while with them I was called towards the light and I felt so overwhelmingly loving, peaceful and knowing. I was asked a series of questions and given information about things by an angel with a staff and dressed in warrior outfit, resembling an African chief and then a decision was made that it was not my time and that I had a mission to fulfill and that I will return. I cannot remember anything after that.*

*I woke up in the same bed in intensive care and was told that I had died and was kept alive via a ventilator and I had been unconscious for 1 week. Since that time I have had flashbacks and been aware that there are spirit guides around protecting me and guiding me. I also have this strong sense that there was a vision of some sort given to me because it's like I've been on this sacred mission regarding utilizing this experience to empower people and tell the world about the realms of the spirit and their advice and guidance for the human population, especially with the young people.*

*Last Updated ( Friday, 04 February 2011 10:39*

People who have NDE's are encouraged to send them to IANDS for their archives. Here is one account just sent in last month:

*Blocked by a Golden Being Riding my bike past a golf course, I see a van run a stop sign; however, I'm unable to swerve out of his way. I'm staring through the van's windshield at the driver and hoping he doesn't hit his brakes. He does, though, and now I'm flying. It's an odd sensation to be sailing through the air like some sort of awkward flightless bird. I don't remember hitting the pavement because I was distracted by the intensely bright column of white light shining out of the top of my body's head. I have only a moment to grasp that I'm outside of my body, and then, swoosh! I'm sucked up the column of light like an envelope in a pneumatic mail tube.*

*I'm standing in a place of love. It's completely enveloping, and I'm thoroughly immersed in feelings of loving acceptance, calmness, and of being home (of belonging). There's a glow of golden light ahead of me in the distance, and I need and want to get there. But as I take a step forward, a golden being blocks my way. Humanoid in shape, there are no features, no clothes, nothing but a glowing being who exudes an overwhelming sense of calm and agape. The right hand of the being is raised palm outward in a stopping motion, and in my head I hear, "You must go back."*

*I'm devastated. I don't want to go back. I want to stay in this place of love. It shakes its head, hand still in that stop position, and in my head I hear, "It's not yet your time. You must go back." "No, please--I want to stay..." I think back. And suddenly there is a horrible shrieking sound that pierces my head. I'm back in my body, which is lying on the street, and I'm screaming. There are EMTs and other people hovering around me, and the driver of the van is on his cell phone. I was only gone for a few seconds, maybe a minute, yet it seemed longer. The feelings of disappointment, of missing out on something stupendous, were strong.*

*I need and want to get back (to stay), but until then the short trips I now take seem to help me. Each time I've stepped over the barrier between this life and the next, it's been to help someone who is dying. Since the accident I've found myself acting as a guide to those crossing over. I understand their fears, and it has helped me overcome mine, too. My fear was that it wasn't real, that it was a dream and that I'd never get that loving feeling back. But I can, and I do, and that has helped me overcome the horrible disappointment I felt in having to come back.*

*I now know that I can cross over there and experience those feelings again and again, and once I'm done with my life here, I know what's waiting for me, so I'm not afraid. And I'm not afraid to help others with their fears, either.*

The International Association of Near Death Experience has collective massive data about NDE's, and has put together a list of the [most common characteristics of the experience](#):

*Characteristics of a Near-Death Experience Most NDE's are felt as peaceful and loving, but some are disturbing. Each near death experience is unique, but as a group NDEs display common features.*

*Intense emotions: commonly of profound peace, well-being, love; others marked by fear, horror, loss*

*A perception of seeing one's body from above (called an out-of-body experience, or OBE), sometimes watching medical resuscitation efforts or moving instantaneously to other places  
Rapid movement through darkness, often toward an indescribable light*

*A sense of being "somewhere else," in a landscape that may seem like a spiritual realm or world  
Incredibly rapid, sharp thinking and observations*

*Encounter with deceased loved ones, possibly sacred figures (the Judges, Jesus, a saint) or unrecognized beings, with whom communication is mind-to-mind; these figures may seem consoling, loving, or terrifying*

*A life review, reliving actions and feeling their emotional impact on others  
In some cases, a flood of knowledge about life and the nature of the universe  
Sometimes a decision to return to the body*



The afterlife is a topic of much interest to Swedenborgians because of Emanuel Swedenborg's experiences and writings. We have a lot to contribute to the modern conversation on the nature of heaven.

Have you ever had an experience of medically dying, and encountering a beautiful heaven? A number of the people on our site were drawn to us because of their own NDE's, and desire to understand Swedenborg's perspective on them.

During the coming weeks, we'll be looking in more detail about accounts of heaven from Swedenborg, and from many modern travelers who have brought us their stories.

Let us pray.

"Lord of all, what a beautiful planet you have made for us to learn from, and what absolute wonder and beauty awaits us when we cross over. Help us to understand the teachings that we receive on this subject, and help us to live better lives on this earth. Give us your blessing and take away any fear that we have so we can live full and abundant lives in our future home. Thank you God for your love and guidance this day and always. Thy Will Be Done. AMEN."  
Love, Rev Judith



## *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*

*August 12, 2012*

### *Readings*

From the Bible

Genesis 28

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it [c] stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. [d] 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel, [e] though the city used to be called Luz.

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord [f] will be my God 22 and [g] this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

From Swedenborg

True Christianity #24 NCE

(a) Until now, no one has known anything about the spiritual world, where there are spirits and angels, and where we go when we die....

2. I say that we go higher, but what I really mean that we are taken up by God. We have free will; we can use it to gain religious knowledge. When we exercise our intellect and gain religious knowledge from the Word, we smooth a pathway that God can use to come down and lift us up.

The concepts that can lift our intellect higher, and let God take us by the hand and lead us can be compared to the steps on the ladder that Jacob saw. It was set up on the ground, but the top of it stretched into heaven. Angels were climbing up on it and Jehovah was standing above it. [Gen. 28: 12-

13.]

Arcana, #3697

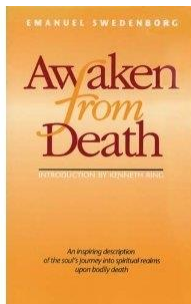
"Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 3699 3699. And behold a ladder set on the earth. That this signifies the communication of the lowest truth and its derivative good, is evident from the signification of a "ladder," as being communication, concerning which we shall speak presently; and from the signification of the "earth," as being what is lowest, for it is said immediately afterwards that "its head reached unto heaven," which denotes that which is highest; all which shows that the "ladder set between earth and heaven," or between the lowest and the highest, signifies communication; that it is the communication of the lowest truth and its derivative good that is here signified by the "ladder set on the earth," is evident from the fact that the subject here is truth and its derivative good of that degree which in the internal sense is here represented by Jacob. In the original tongue the term "ladder" is derived from an expression which signifies a "path" or "way," and that "path" or "way" is predicated of truth, may be seen above (n. 627, 2333). Moreover, when angels are conversing about truth, this is exhibited representatively in the world of spirits by "ways" (n. 189, 3477); all of which shows what is signified by a "ladder, one extremity of which is set on the earth, while the other reaches to heaven," namely, the communication of truth which is in the lowest place with truth which is in the highest, which communication is treated of in what follows. (That there are lowest truths and goods, and also highest truths and goods, and steps between them as of a ladder, may be seen above, n. 3691.)

## Message

### Climbing Jacob's Ladder

Swedenborg's accounts of his visits to heavens remain a classic in the literature of the near-death experiences' field.

Swedenborg's encounters are detailed clearly for us in *Heaven & Hell*, Section III. There he gives an account of what it is like to leave one's body at death. This section of *Heaven & Hell* was featured in the book, *Awaken from Death*, which J. Appleseed published in 1993. It was a short book that gave a pithy account of Swedenborg's trips to heaven, and showed them to be quite similar to today's NDE's.



*448. How this resuscitation is effected has both been told to me and shown to me in living experience. The actual experience was granted to me that I might have a complete knowledge of the process.*

I am reminded of the account family members give about the death of Rev. Dr. Cal Turley, a former President of Convention. He had a sudden heart attack while at home one evening. They said that his last words were, "Yes, I understand what you are trying to do." It was as though he was speaking with spirits who was helping him to leave his body.

## INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

Near-death experiences were coming to the public's attention in the 1970's by the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Raymond Moody, Jr. and George Ritchie. Soon, research was being done by Kenneth Ring, PhD, Michael Sabom, MD, Bruce Greyson, MD, and others.

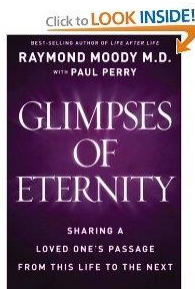
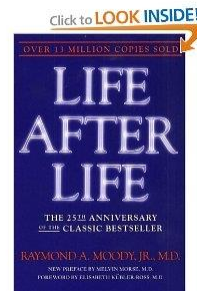


The researchers and the experiencers needed a way to stay connected, and IANDS was founded in 1978 and incorporated in Connecticut in 1981. It was the first organization in the world devoted to the study of near-death experiences.

IANDS has collected many accounts of people making their way to Heaven's door. Some experiences involve a ladder. Here is [one example](#):

*Then, I began to see a very, very bright light ahead of me. I must have been talking out loud because I heard my mother say go toward the light. I continued on the way that I was going and at some point I could see clouds or a thick mist above. The light was everywhere. The closer I came to where I was going I saw a ladder, which went up into the mist/clouds. I began to climb the ladder and saw a hand reaching down to me. I could not see a face. I heard my mother say grab the hand. I don't know if I said it out loud or not but I knew it was the hand of Jesus. This is the first and the last memory of earth.*

The story of Jacob's ladder in the Old Testament has been depicted many times in art and music. Swedenborg saw its importance in the communication it provided between earth and heaven: *the communication of truth which is in the lowest place with truth which is in the highest*. It also represented the way by which God reaches out a hand to us and pulls us towards heaven: The concepts that can lift our intellect higher, and let God take us by the hand and lead us can be compared to the steps on the ladder that Jacob saw.



What is your ladder that connects your life on earth with the world of spirit in the heavens? For many of us, Swedenborg himself represents a rung on that ladder. His insight help us understand what lies ahead for us all when we pass into spirit. Swedenborg not only had the profound experience of entering the heavens, he had the brilliance and articulation to describe it to us. The near death experiences of so many people through the years is also another rung on the ladder helping us to peek at what lies beyond. Organizations like IANDS provide yet another rung. They collect the thousands of NDE's from around the world, and make the information available to researchers.

Have you ever had something similar to a near death experience? If you would like to share an experience you had; or one you've heard about, you can add it at the end of this page.

Let us pray.

Inspiration & Prayer for 8-12-12:

For inspiration this week give yourself a break...Meditate on the Light and Love of he Lord. Bathe in the Light, and Silence of Peace. Know that you are loved completely by your creator. "God, creator of all, thank you for all that you have brought into our lives. Thank you for the freedom of choice. We choose to live each day with you, asking to be a blessing to all we meet and that they be a blessing to us. Let us focus on you each moment of each day. Thank you for our Loved Ones, our homes, our work, our friends and most of all Your Love and Wisdom. May we be eternally blessed by Your Spirit and Love. AMEN."



## Suicide and Heaven

August 19, 2012

### Readings

From the Bible

1 Samuel 31 New International Version (NIV)

*Saul Takes His Life* 31 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. 3 The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.

4 Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me."

But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. 5 When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. 6 So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.

7 When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.

8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. 10 They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.

11 When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all their valiant men marched through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. 13 Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.

From Swedenborg:

Spiritual Experiences (Buss) n. 1783 1783.

*It was told me they were such as had formerly [in their lifetime] slaughtered whole armies, as is recorded in the Scripture histories, having induced insanities upon them, for they rushed into the chambers of their brain, and then inspired such terror that one slew another. That they were able to strike such terror I was assured, but it is seldom done at the present day. It is extremely rare that the bonds are loosened to any of them at this day, and only takes place in the case of someone who is of such a quality that it were better that he should be permitted to perish as to his body than as to his soul, and in regard to whom, unless he perished bodily in this manner, by means of insanity and suicide, he could not well be prevented from perishing to eternity.*

### Message Suicide and Heaven



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

Annie killed herself in the movie, "What Dreams May Come." Her grief was inconsolable after her two children were killed in an auto accident. In the movie, we are told that Annie couldn't enter heaven after choosing to kill herself, and that she was sent to hell. It was a hell with some possibilities for redemption, and, in fact, her husband finds her and reminds her of who she is.

Swedenborg never thought that people who died by suicide would be punished. One reason, of course, is that God is not judgmental; any condemnation comes from ourselves.

Another reason is that Swedenborg was quite sensitive to issues of mental illness, and felt that one did not have true freedom of choice in such a state.

Divine Providence (Dole) n. 141

141. *The reason no one is reformed in a state of mental illness is that mental illness deprives us of rationality and therefore of the freedom to act rationally. The mind is sick and not healthy, and while a healthy mind is rational, a sick one is not. The illnesses are things like depression, imagined or illusory guilt, various kinds of hallucinations, mental anguish brought on by misfortunes, and mental anxiety and pain brought on by physical disorders. These are sometimes thought of as temptations, but they are not. Real temptations focus on spiritual issues, and during them the mind is in possession of its skills. The states I am talking about focus on earthly issues, and during them the mind goes mad.*

Swedenborg's understanding of mental illness was quite advanced for his day. His view helps us appreciate the experiences people who kill themselves, and then are revived to tell us what they experiences.

We've been talking about Near Death Experiences. Thousands of people have been clinically dead, but have been brought back to life; and have an amazing story of the after-life. The experiences of those who died by suicide is rarely any different from the experiences of others who encounter death. Here are some conclusions of the International Association of near Death Studies:

Researcher P.M.H. Atwater wrote in Beyond the Light:

*Seldom are suicide near-death scenarios hell-like. Contrary to popular notions, most suicide near-death experiences are positive, or at least illustrative of the importance of life and its living. ... Near-death survivors from suicide attempts can and often do return with the same sense of mission that any other experimenter of the phenomenon reports. And that mission is usually to tell other potential victims that suicide is not the answer.*

### **First-Hand Accounts of Suicidal NDE's**

One young man who attempted to take his own life write this afterwards: *Since then, suicide has never crossed my mind as a way out. It's a copout to me and not the way to heaven. I wish you luck in your research and hope my experience will help stop someone from taking his own life. It is a terrible waste.*

Here is a similar account:

*I woke up in the same bed in intensive care and was told that I had died and was kept alive via a ventilator and I had been unconscious for 1 week. Since that time I have had flashbacks and been aware that there are spirit guides around protecting me and guiding me. I also have this strong sense that there was a vision of some sort given to me because it's like I've been on this sacred mission regarding utilizing this experience to empower people and tell the world about the realms of the spirit and their advice and guidance for the human population, especially with the young people.*

This is an excellent article of a person's suicide attempt followed by an NDE.

[An article on first-person suicide](#)

Here is another story from the IANDS archives:

*I was with my partner at the time and we had been going through difficulties. I had felt this strong sense of loss and I felt that something was calling me. I then ended up taking chloroform. I could feel the effects straight away, this creeping relaxing feeling and the sensation of me slipping out of something that felt like prison. I could remember being in the hospital on the ceiling watching all these doctors and nurses attending to me. I could also hear my mum and brother talking to me asking me why this had happened. It felt warm and radiant like someone was with me at this time and they were conveying a feeling of peace and love that was something I had never ever felt before.*

*In no time I was traveling down this tunnel with beings on either side. It felt like I knew them all and they were talking to me asking me how I am and what had been going on in my life. They also showed me something that I could not recall but it felt familiar. After a while with them I was called towards the light and I felt so overwhelmingly loving, peaceful and knowing. I was asked a series of questions and given information about things by an angel with a staff and dressed in warrior outfit, resembling an African chief and then a decision was made that it was not my time and that I had a mission to fulfill and that I will return. I cannot remember anything after that.*

## **Research into suicide and NDE's**

Greyson (1986) found that 26 percent of a group of patients who attempted suicide had NDEs. Of the people who wrote in to us, only 2 percent had their NDEs during suicide attempts. Greyson (1981, 1991, 1992–93) has published additional studies on suicide attempters who had NDEs, finding that their likelihood of attempting suicide again was dramatically lower, compared to nonNDE suicide attempters. But if any of you want a Ph.D. topic, this is an area on which we still need more data.

## **NDE Accounts used in psychology practice**

Catherine Burton, Ph.D., wrote [an article](#) about using NDE stories in her counseling practice. She writes:

*I have found research on NDEs to be very helpful for clients contemplating suicide. These individuals have turned away from life, and are looking to suicide as a way to end their pain. In a compassionate way, I share with them the experience of persons who have tried suicide, yet came back. When my clients hear that others who attempted suicide continued to be conscious*



*even though their body had been declared dead (Barbara Rommer, MD, Blessing in Disguise, pages 44-45, 56-58), they see that there really may be no such thing as killing yourself.*

*Secondly, persons whose NDE occurred during a suicide, often found themselves, at first, in a darkness and despair similar to what they'd been experiencing before the attempt, and discovered that suicide did not put an end to their emotional pain. Those who then turned to the light during their experience were told by beings of light that suicide would not be a solution. They were told they would have to come back, face the same situation and feelings again, and make other choices (Melvin Morse, MD, Closer to the Light, pages 184-188; Barbara Rommer, MD, Blessing in Disguise, pages 47-48; Phillip L. Berman, The Journey Home, pages 119- 120).*

*At the same time, those who attempted suicide also found hope, for they experienced—even if only for a moment— the greater reality of light, love, and the larger meaning of life. Reading accounts of experiencers posted on [www.near-death.com](http://www.near-death.com) and on this web site can let clients in distress know that there are others who have felt what they feel, and that these others found the hope and courage to face reality and to heal. I have found with almost every client that sharing this information helped them to mobilize the internal resources of their true self to make a decision to turn back towards life, to face the situations that had overwhelmed them, and to begin the process of healing and growing from those challenges.*

## **NDE's, Swedenborg, and You**

How does all of this relate to your life? It's part of a Swedenborgian perspective that we are not condemned by a judgmental God after death: even if we die by suicide. Heaven and hell are freely-chosen options for all of us after death. Swedenborg had an advanced understanding of mental illness, and how an injured or diseased brain could lead to actions that were not part of a person's normal functioning. The life after death is an opportunity to heal all physical and emotional burdens from earthly life.

Many Christian traditions have taught that one does not go to heaven after suicide. Swedenborg says that is not true, which provides comfort to people who have lost a friend or family member to suicide. On the other hand, there is a strong reason to seek help for suicidal feelings. Escaping from one's body is not an end to one's problems or feelings; they are continued on another level and have to be addressed.

How does this perspective of Swedenborg's -- affirmed by many personal NDE accounts -- impact you?

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, We are filled with gratitude for all you do for us, especially those times of loneliness when You hold us close with Your love and comfort. Thank, you Lord, thank you. We are whole again and at peace. Knowing Your presence and Complete Love. Thank you for the ability to get out of the way and ask for Your influx. Help us Lord to come to you when we need anything and help us to grow in Your love and humility. Help us find our road when we have strayed. May we share blessings with all those we meet and may they share their blessings with us. AMEN.  
Love, Rev. Judith

## ***Life After Near Death***

***August 26, 2012***

### ***Readings***

From the Bible

Romans 8: NIV

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died —more than that, who was raised to life —is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." [j]

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**From Swedenborg**

DLW; NCE

LOVE is our life. For most people, the existence of love is a given, but the nature of love is a mystery. 1 As for the existence of love, this we know from everyday language. We say that someone loves us, that monarchs love their subjects, and that subjects love their monarch. We say that a husband loves his wife and that a mother loves her children, and vice versa. We say that people love their country, their fellow citizens, their neighbor. We use the same language about impersonal objects, saying that someone loves this or that thing.

Even though the word "love" is so commonly on our tongues, still hardly anyone knows what love is. When we stop to think about it, we find that we cannot form any image of it in our thoughts, so we say either that it is not really anything or that it is simply something that flows into us from our sight, hearing, touch, and conversation and therefore influences us. We are wholly unaware that it is our very life—not just the general life of our whole body and of all our thoughts, but the life of their every least detail. Wise people can grasp this when you ask, "If you take away the effects of love, can you think anything? Can you do anything? As the effects of love lose their warmth, do not thought and speech and action lose theirs as well? Do they not warm up as love warms up?"



## MESSAGE

by Rev. Wilma



What we often call "near-death experiences" do not always occur at the moment of death. [IANDS](#) defines NDE's as:

*A near-death experience (NDE) is a profound psychological event that may occur to a person close to death or, if not near death, in a situation of physical or emotional crisis. Because it includes transcendental and mystical elements, an NDE is a powerful event of consciousness; it is not mental illness.*

When I read that definition, I realized that I had had an NDE many years ago. I didn't die clinically, so I haven't considered it an NDE. However, I was certainly in physical and emotional crisis which exploded into a transcendental experience that changed my life.

It took place one summer afternoon around 1994. I was sitting in the yard with my cats. Marty, a new stray cat who had come to live me, attacked my little kitty Starhawk. I pulled Marty off Starhawk, and he plunged his claws into my leg. Immediately, I felt intense pain. I got concerned as a thick red line was slowly moving up my leg. I drove myself to the E.R., where they said it looked like blood poisoning; I had to start anti-biotics right away. They said that in generations past, this could easily be fatal, as the infection made its way to my heart. They gave me a shot and sent me home, telling me to return if the red line hadn't stopped moving in a few hours.

Several hours later, the red line was marching along up my leg towards my torso. I was feeling very sick, so I drove myself back to the E.R. I was taken to a small room and told to lie down on the examining table. Then I was left alone. Suddenly, I was above my body and feeling incredible. I felt better than I had ever felt before. My mind was clear and sharp and I felt so completely "me."

Most astounding was the Presence I felt with me. I had never before felt so loved. It was not just "love", however. It was a love that came from knowing me absolutely and completely. No one had ever known me as this Presence did. And out of that knowing came perfect love. I knew that I could never do anything that would end that love for me. It is that feeling that remains with me with since that encounter. I had never before – and have never since – felt simultaneously totally known and totally loved.

I felt that I was being asked a question. Did I want to come home now? It seemed to me that I had a choice. I didn't feel that I was at the moment of death. But it seemed that my infection could be cured or it could cause my death; I had a choice. I wanted to move deeper into this profound love and never

leave! Yet, there was so much more I wanted to do, be, and learn in life. With sadness, I said I wanted to return. As soon as that thought formed in my mind, I was back in my body, feeling sick. The ER room door opened, and a doctor and nurse came in with an IV. I was hooked up to an IV antibiotic and put in the hospital over-night. At some point in the next few hours, an anti-biotic finally took hold and the red line began to disappear. I was glowing with ecstasy for days afterwards.

Something has been different in my life ever since. In even my darkest times, I remember being known and loved. I don't have the slightest doubting cell anywhere in my body that I will have that experience again when I leave my body for good. It has enriched my time here. I feel so certain that I will be "home" eventually, that each day – each moment – of earthly life feels more precious.

I have read on the [IANDS web site](#), that research shows that most people with a Near Death Experience have similar changes in their life.

*Around eighty percent of the people who experienced near-death states claimed that their lives were forever changed by what happened to them. On closer examination, though, a pattern of surprising dimensions emerged. Experiencers were not returning with just a renewed zest for life and a more spiritual outlook. They were evidencing specific psychological and physiological differences on a scale never before faced by them. And this was true with child experiencers, as well as with teenagers and adults.*

These are the primary psychological changes in NDErs, according to research:

- Loss of the fear of death
- Near-death experiencers come to love and accept others more easily.
- Most experiencers develop a sense of timelessness.
- Experiencers often become quite intuitive.
- Forgiveness usually becomes more important than criticism.
- Although the world is the same, the experiencer isn't any different, so the purpose of life seems more profound.

It is no coincidence that Dr. Raymond Moody, one of the founders of IANDS in the 1970's, was a reader of Swedenborg. The accounts of modern-day journeys to the spirit world are quite similar to what Swedenborg wrote about -- especially in *Heaven & Hell*. Swedenborg tells us about the loving angels who are with us each step of the way as we move out of our bodies. Swedenborg was invited to visit the spirit world and to experience the process of leaving one's body without being physically dead. He was given extensive tours of the heavens so that he could write about it for the benefit of all of us. Most people do not have a "near death experience." However, Swedenborg would say that we don't need to have them. We can learn from the accounts of others, which inspire our comprehension of the spirit world, while keeping us grounded in the earthly world where we are actively engaged in our life purpose.

What is it like for you to read about the encounters others have had with the spirit world; Swedenborg, as well as modern experiencers? How can it inspire you in the fulfilling of your life purposes?

## INSPIRATION AND PRAYER:

by Rev. Judith



A few weeks ago I suggested that we mind journey to that place we call Heaven. When we arrive to explore: What did we feel; what did we see; what did we hear? Did you take the journey? Recalling what happened how did it affect your life?

What questions came up for you? Did it change you? What did you learn?

(I have had three near death experiences, and they have changed me. The first, at 20 years old, took away my grief for my daughter who died; I lost my fear of death; I knew Jesus existed even today in this world; and I knew I was loved so deeply and completely just as I was, "warts and all". In the second experience I was given a choice to leave or stay....I chose to stay for my children, and I lived more spiritually, and my understanding of others grew. The third I chose to not go down the tunnel.... and spent more time praying. Today I appreciate life, and am able to assist those who are near death with prayer and encouragement. I have been coordinator of death vigils, and sat in vigil with those dying, praying and meditating....creating spiritual space for them to transition from.)

"Dearest Lord, thank you for all the events in our lives.

Help us to understand birth and death more deeply.

Give us the tools to bring light, love, and blessing to those

Just born, and those dying. Help us to learn to listen to our

Angels and guidance each day. We ask for you to give us

The ability to encourage and empower others as we walk

Through our lives, help us to be more open-minded, and loving

Toward all. Bless us as we bless others, keeping our hearts

Open to your will and bring light to our dark places. AMEN."

Love, Rev. Judith.



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

## *Love in Act*

*September 2, 2012*

### *Readings*

From the Bible

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

2 And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

14 To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. 17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. 20 Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. 21 He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. 22 Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Luke 12:35-44

35 "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

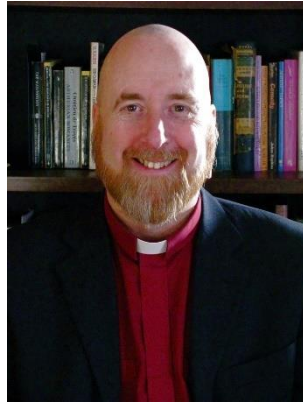
41 Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"

42 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. 44 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

## *MESSAGE*

Love in Act

Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete



Our Old Testament passage this morning talks about serving God, and loving God. So the question arises, how do we serve God? What is meant by serving God? We have a related passage in our New Testament reading this morning. It also speaks of service. Jesus tells us to be ready for our master to return from a wedding banquet. The very master will serve his servants when he comes back, if they are up waiting for him. We are told to always be ready to meet Jesus, for we don't know when He will call upon us. "You must always be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Luke 12:40). I like this New Testament passage because of its reference to the wedding banquet. Scattered throughout the New Testament are references to a wedding. The wedding symbolizes a state in which a person is "married" to God, or united with God in a bond of love. Recall that line in Revelation, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (19:9). When we are united with God in a loving bond, we are always ready to meet Him. So both the Old Testament passage and the New Testament passage talk about being united with God in love and in serving God.

Before I discuss the topic of serving God, I need to clarify some of the Old Testament language. Several times people have told me about their difficulty with phrases like "fear of God," as we heard this morning in Deuteronomy. God does not want us to fear Him. And there is a higher meaning to fear of God than what we normally take fear to be. Swedenborg talks about holy fear. He writes,

But holy fear is not so much the fear of hell and damnation, as it is of doing or thinking anything against the Lord and against the neighbor, and thus anything against the good of love and the truth of faith (AC 2826).

I take this to mean the fear of causing offence. Even in our common conversations with one another, we can find ourselves saying, "Well, I don't want to offend you, but . . ." Isn't this a kind of fear? A fear of offending someone or putting them off. And in our general encounters with other people, we are careful not to say offensive things, or to offend. Isn't this a kind of holy fear? It is a respect for others, and a desire not to hurt their feelings. It is a fear of causing offense, and we all have it with one another. This is how I understand fear of God. We love God so much that we don't want to stray from the path of love or offend against the Holy Spirit. Of course God doesn't get offended with us. But I think all of genuine love has a quality of holy fear in it, in that we care for others and want to remain in mutual love. We have a holy fear of not breaching the love and trust we have for others. This is also true for God. Then

there's the aspect of awe. I think there's a kind of holy fear in the feeling of awe. And in the presence of infinite love, and infinite goodness; in the presence of the Source of all life, I think we have a feeling of awe, and holy fear.

So we can now come back to our question about serving God. Here we come across a difficult term in Swedenborg. Swedenborg talks in many places about what he calls "uses." So he says, "Serving the Lord is performing uses" (AC 7038). And uses are the very source of heavenly joy. Everyone in heaven has a use. And we find our joy here on earth by performing uses.

It is easy to take the word use in a narrow sense. We often say to lazy people, "Make yourself useful," which means that they should get up and do some work. Or when we think of being useful, we think of plumbers, or auto mechanics, who do some concrete service for society. In fact, it is easy to think of use as being only an occupation, or some form of work.

However, I think Swedenborg has more in mind when he talks about use. I looked through the Swedenborg Concordance to find the range of meaning for uses, and I also looked at the Latin word and its Indo-European root. Some translate the Latin *usus* as service. That is included in the meaning of the word. But there is much, much more than that. I decided to stay with the term use for this discussion. When I went to the Latin, I found some interesting things. First of all, the Latin word is one of those general terms that has a lot of meanings associated with it. The very first definitions given for *usus* are wide ranging. It is defined as, "use, practice, employment, exercise, enjoyment" (C. T. Lewis, *Elementary Latin Dictionary*.) We do indeed find employment here. But the word branches off into practice, and some exercise. This is more like a deed—any deed. Then what are we to make of the definition, "enjoyment?" So in Latin, *usus* ranges from employment to enjoyment.

Then I looked up its Indo-European root and found something even more interesting. The root AV means "delight, desire." So the root of the Latin word is entirely emotional. It is a form of delight and desire. You see how far away from employment we are now with just the Latin root for use.

So serving God through uses has very much an emotional component to it. Swedenborg employs the word in keeping with these emotional connotations. He writes, "What is love unless there is something that is loved? That "something" is use" (DLW 297). So we see that use is the object of our loves. In general, uses are those things we do to express our love for the neighbor or for God. Use is love taking form in action. So we find Swedenborg saying, "Goods are goods in act, that is, the goods of charity, which are uses" (HH 391). The good things we do are uses. The performance of some deed of love, then, is also use.

The man who is led by the Lord, is in freedom itself, and thereby in enjoyment and blessedness itself. Goods and truths are appropriated to him; there is given him affection and desire for doing good, and then nothing is more delightful to him than to perform uses (AC 6325).

See how affection, desire, blessedness and enjoyment constitute what use is.



Use is connected with charity. Charity for Swedenborg means more than building children's hospitals, or giving to the poor—the traditional meanings of charity. Charity for Swedenborg is all the acts of love that we perform anywhere, any time. We find Swedenborg saying that uses are the acts of love that we perform, or deeds of charity.

Those who are in charity, that is, in love to the neighbor, from which is all living enjoyment of pleasures, do not look to the enjoyment of pleasures except on account of their use. For there is no charity unless there are works of charity. Charity consists in work, or in use. He who loves the neighbor as himself, perceives no enjoyment of charity except in its exercise, or in use; and therefore a life of charity is a life of uses. Such is the life of the whole heaven; for the kingdom of the Lord, because it is the kingdom of mutual love, is a kingdom of uses. Every pleasure, therefore, which is from charity, has its enjoyment from use. . . . some looking more directly, and some more remotely and indirectly, to the kingdom of the Lord, or to the Lord (AC 997).

In this passage we find that heaven is a kingdom of mutual love, and so it is a kingdom of uses. So again, use is tied to love, enjoyment, and pleasure.

But occupations are not excluded from Swedenborg's application of the term use. The work that we do to benefit society is certainly a use. But uses are not limited to occupations.

That serving the Lord is performing uses, is because true worship consists in the performance of uses, thus in exercising charity. . . . uses consist during a person's life in the world, in every one's discharging properly his duty in his station, thus in serving his country, society, and his neighbor from the heart, in dealing sincerely with his fellow, and in performing kind offices prudently according to the quality of every one. These uses are especially works of charity, and those whereby the Lord is mainly worshipped (AC 7038).

We find here that uses are discharging the duties proper to one's station. But this statement also includes being sincere. Would we normally call sincerity a use? It is. Then there is that line saying that uses are, "performing kind offices prudently according to the quality of every one." So use is also being nice and kind.

I think we can say, then, that uses are love being expressed in act. If we love God and our neighbor, we will be performing uses in everything we do.

With a person . . . in proportion as he lives According to Divine order—thus in proportion as he lives in love to the Lord, and in charity to the neighbor—in the same proportion his acts are uses in form, and are correspondences, through which he is conjoined with heaven (HH 112).

Every good deed we do when we love God and the neighbor conjoins us with heaven. Then we are those alert servants who waited for their master to return from the wedding banquet. Then we are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. Then we are serving God.

## *INSPIRATION AND PRAYER:*

by Rev. Judith



After reading this sermon, I am inspired to inventory myself and examine what is truly service to the Lord, and what has a self centered motive. If you are inclined, look for the original prompting to do acts of Love and Charity. If there is any part that is self benefitting that is not in the service to the Lord. Service to the Lord comes as a deep heart centered place of Love for the Lord and is a devotional act.

"O Lord, let me only do acts of true service to you. When I stray to self benefitting motives make me aware of my wayward ways. Help me to do acts of love only. Keep me focused on you and your Divine will in my life. Thank you for the Blessings of all in my life. May I do good, loving and faithful service to you daily. AMEN." Love, Rev. Judith

## Swedenborg Visits Heaven

September 9, 2012

### Readings

From the Bible

Revelation 21 New International Version (NIV)

A New Heaven and a New Earth<sup>21</sup> Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth,"<sup>[a]</sup> for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 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. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death'<sup>[b]</sup>"<sup>[b]</sup> or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

From Swedenborg:  
Heaven and Hell, NCE

460 Finally, I should like to offer a secret no one has ever known before, namely that everything good and true that comes from the Lord and makes heaven is in the human form. This is true not only of the greatest whole but also of every least part. This form influences everyone who accepts what is good and true from the Lord, and causes everyone in heaven to be in a human form according to that acceptance. This is why heaven is consistent with itself in general and in particular, why the human form is the form of the whole, of each community, and of each angel, as explained in the four chapters from §59 to §80. I need to add here that this is also the form of the details of thought that come from heavenly love in angels. This secret may not fit well into the understanding of anyone on earth, but it is clear to the understanding of angels because they are in heaven's light.



## MESSAGE

Swedenborg in Heaven  
by Rev. Wilma Wake



When Dr. Raymond Moody was first learning about near death experiences, he turned to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg was probably the first modern reporter of the journey to heaven and back.

The story is told in great detail in the book, *Heaven and Hell*.

George Dole, translator of the New Century edition, says

*Secrets of Heaven belongs on the theologian's bookshelf. Heaven and Hell might feel at home in the airport book rack.*

The book gave the foundation of his theology:

*It may not be amiss to alert the reader to the presence in Heaven and Hell of a pervasive ethical concern. ...For him personally, that is, experiences of the spiritual world were not an avenue of escape from earthly responsibilities. There is a recurrent emphasis in Heaven and Hell on a generous, honest, and useful life here and now as the only viable foundation for heavenly life hereafter.*

The book begins with a theoretical explanation of the theology of the Lord and the after-life. But, I'd like to focus on *Part II: The World of Spirits and Our State after Death*. In this section, he talks about the experience of traveling to heavens; an account that has some similarity to others who encounter a near death experience.

He was told that he was being given the experience that people have when they die, but with a memory to return to the earth:

*449 I was brought into a state in which my physical senses were inoperative—very much, then, like the state of people who are dying. However, my deeper life and thought remained intact so that I could perceive and retain what was happening to me*

He is clear that “death” is a kind of awakening.

445

*We can see, then, that when we die we simply move from one world into another. This is why in the inner meaning of the Word, This is why in the inner meaning of the Word, and “death” means resurrection and a continuation of life.*

He explains the mechanics of the transition:

*447 After this separation, our spirit stays in the body briefly, but not after the complete stoppage of the heart, which varies depending on the cause of death. In some cases the motion of the heart continues for quite a while, and in others it does not. The moment it does stop, we are awakened, but this is done by the Lord alone. “Being awakened” means having our spirit led out of our body and into the spiritual world, which is commonly called “resurrection.”*

He is clear that we continue to have a body and all of the bodily sensations:

*[3] This is why almost all the people who arrive from this world are as astonished as they can be to find that they are alive and that they are just as human as ever, that they are seeing and hearing and talking, that their bodies are still endowed with the sense of touch, and that nothing at all has changed (see §74 above).*

New arrivals in heaven can find it hard to grasp that people on earth are preparing to bury their body:

*451 This first stage of our life after death does not last more than a few days, though. In the following pages I will be describing how we are then brought from one state into another until finally we arrive either in heaven or in hell. This too is something I have been allowed to learn from a great deal of experience. 452 I have talked with some people on the third day after their death, when the events described in §§449 and 450 have been completed. I talked with three whom I had known in the world and told them that their funeral services were now being planned so that their bodies could be buried. When they heard me say it was so that they could be buried, they were struck with a kind of bewilderment. They said that they were alive, and that people were burying what had been useful to them in the world. Later on, they were utterly amazed at the fact that while they had been living in their bodies they had not believed in this kind of life after death, and particularly that this was the case for almost everyone in the church. Some people during their earthly lives*

Throughout *Heaven and Hell*, he gives details about the world of work, worship, and the arts that exists. It shows us a heaven that is not filled with winged angels sitting on clouds playing harps. It is a continuation of the life we have on earth, with spirits following their deepest passions to find useful work.

He offers a crucial human secret:

*460 Finally, I should like to offer a secret no one has ever known before, namely that everything good and true that comes from the Lord and makes heaven is in the human form. This is true not only of the greatest whole but also of every least part. This form influences everyone who accepts what is good and true from the Lord, and causes everyone in heaven to be in a human form according to that acceptance. This is why heaven is consistent with itself in general and in*

*particular, why the human form is the form of the whole, of each community, and of each angel, as explained in the four chapters from §59 to §80. I need to add here that this is also the form of the details of thought that come from heavenly love in angels. This secret may not fit well into the understanding of anyone on earth, but it is clear to the understanding of angels because they are in heaven's light.*

Swedenborg's description of heaven was quite radical for its time, but it is a view we are more familiar with today since so many people have shared near-death experiences.

During the coming months, we'll be reading Heaven and Hell together, and chatting about it on the first Thursday of each month.

Does Swedenborg's accounts of the after-life give you a deeper theological framework for understanding modern near-death experiences?

How do you anticipate your own journey to heaven? What people and experiences do you expect to encounter?

Does Swedenborg's accounts change your view of the after-life – or of your life today?

## INSPIRATION AND PRAYER:

by [Rev. Judith](#)



Inspiration and Prayer for 9/9/12:

This week I have been thinking about Heaven and Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti is devotion to the Lord. Worship of the Lord. How often do we spend quality time in prayer and devotion? I know there are some days when I don't even say hello until the day is half over. In this Global Climate, the world intruded on my spiritual life again. Has this happened to you? While studying Swedenborg's writings on heaven I ran across this:

"A man whose moral life is spiritual has heaven within himself, but he whose moral life is merely natural does not have heaven within himself; and for the reason that heaven flows in from above and opens man's interiors, and through his interiors flows into his exteriors; while the world flows in from beneath and opens the exteriors but not the interiors." HH n.319[2]

" Dear God, help me keep my eyes only on your will for me each day. Let me think first each morning of you and your Divine Will .Let me be open to your prompting in each moment of my day and live my life according to Your Will." Amen.  
Love Rev. Judith.

## *Life After Life*

**September 16, 2012**

### *Readings*

From the Bible

Psalm 100 New International Version (NIV)

Psalm 100A psalm. For giving grateful praise.<sup>1</sup> Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Worship the Lord with gladness;

come before him with joyful songs.

3 Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his people;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Footnotes: [Psalm 100:3](#) Or and not we ourselves

From Swedenborg

Divine Love and Wisdom (Ager) n. 113 113. ANGELS ARE IN THE LORD, AND THE LORD IN THEM; AND BECAUSE ANGELS ARE RECIPIENTS, THE LORD ALONE IS HEAVEN.

Heaven is called "the dwelling-place of God," also "the throne of God," and from this it is believed that God is there as is a king in his kingdom. But God (that is, the Lord) is in the sun above the heavens, and by His presence in heat and light, is in the heavens (as is shown in the last two paragraphs). But although the Lord is present in heaven in that manner, still He is there as He is in Himself. For (as shown just above, n. 108-112) the distance between the sun and heaven is not distance, but appearance of distance; and since that distance is only an appearance it follows that the Lord Himself is in heaven, for He is in the love and wisdom of the angels of heaven; and since He is in the love and wisdom of all angels, and the angels constitute heaven, He is in the whole heaven.

### *MESSAGE*

Life After Life  
by Rev. Wilma Wake

I was thrilled to hear Raymond Moody lecture in January of 1988. It was the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Swedenborg, and the Swedenborg Foundation sponsored a colloquium on the integration of science and spirituality. There was a panel of prestigious people. The one I looked forward to and enjoyed the most was Dr. Raymond Moody.

Like many, I had been joyously impressed with his book, *Life after Life*, released in 1975. For those of us who knew that life continued after death, it was heart-warming to have real accounts of people who had clinically died, and returned to talk of light and love welcoming them to the next world. It was especially gratifying for us Swedenborgians to have something so concrete to show what Swedenborg was saying in his writings. It was particularly gratifying to us that Moody had read Swedenborg when doing his research and he had become a friend of Swedenborgians.

It was Moody who coined the term “near-death experiences” and launched the field of research.

I enjoyed listening to Dr. Moody. He was knowledgeable, warm, and witty. I had no idea that in just a few short years he would make a suicide attempt and have his own NDE.

I read about this journey in his book: *Paranormal: My Life In pursuit of the Afterlife* [co-authored with Paul Perry] that was released earlier this year. He wrote:

*From my late twenties until now, I have lived with a disease called myxedema. This is a difficult affliction to diagnose. Simply stated, with this disease the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroxine, a hormone that acts in our body something like the volume dial on a radio. The result of this disease is a variety of peculiar symptoms that can lead to myxedema madness, in which the afflicted person gradually loses his mind. Although myxedema seems as though it should be an easy disease to diagnose, it isn't.*

His disease was not diagnosed until his suicide attempt in 1991. After the diagnosis he tried to keep his disease a secret, for fear that it would demean his reputation or his work. In *Paranormal*, he “comes out” with his illness:

*When one man said to me— as others have said— that his near-death experience drained him of strength yet filled him with hope, I understood completely how that could take place. I also understand that to accept such a contradiction, one often has to experience an altered state as powerful as illness. That's why I feel it's important to begin this book by recounting the battle of my own life. Without such a near-fatal illness, I wouldn't have the empathy for others necessary to continue my research in the field of the afterlife. And without it, I wouldn't have had my own near-death experience, an event that taught me more in a few minutes than years of research and lecturing.*

He describes the incident this way:

*My thyroid level had dipped off the charts, although I didn't know it. I just knew that I had not felt well for months, but somehow I had convinced myself that it was world events combined with the impact of those events on my personal situation that was making me ill. ...*

*It was in San Diego that the idea to kill myself took hold. I sat in my hotel room, looking down at the street below, and considered prying the window open and taking a final leap. Every day it was feeling as though tomorrow would be the day everything came apart. ... Life was broken. I wanted out. I spoke to Paul for more than an hour and then, exhausted, fell asleep. In the*



*morning I left for Atlanta. I hoped things might improve when I returned to the comfort of home, but they didn't.*

*By Sunday I was completely over the edge, deep in the grip of myxedema madness. With a large bottle of the painkiller Darvon in my possession, I got in my car and drove to my office at the university. There, I reasoned, I would lock the door and take an overdose of painkillers sufficient to kill me. In my office I opened the bottle of Darvon and poured them out onto my desk. Then I began to take them several at a time with gulps from a can of Coca-Cola. I took about two dozen of the pills and then sat down at the desk. For some reason I called my co-author Paul. "I've done it," I said with a note of finality. "Done what?" he asked. "I've taken pills and I'm dying," I said.*

Paul called emergency personnel who came to rescue Raymond.

*"Are you okay?" asked one of the EMTs. "Sure," I said, and I was. Never better, actually. I was not afraid of death, but I had obviously become very afraid of life. Things began to happen very fast after that. My chest felt very heavy, and I had the feeling of slipping into a dark blue place. They hoisted me onto the gurney and strapped me in and rolled me quickly down the passageway to the waiting ambulance. As they loaded me into the ambulance the world around me began to fade.....*

*My heart stopped. What happened next is almost indescribable, but I will do my best to make it less so. I could feel myself separate from the world around me. In a funny way it was almost like cellophane being pulled off a smooth surface, one reality separating from another. I sensed spirits around me, helpful presences, who were there to guide me through this separation. I tried to see these spirit guides, but I could not make them out because I was surrounded by a light that was not of this world. I could hear them speaking, and although I couldn't make out what was being said, their presence was soothing and calm and I felt a radiant love from them. I didn't have an opportunity to examine myself in this state to see what I looked like or was made of. And I didn't have the time I would have liked to try to make contact with the spirits either. Instead, I felt myself "startup" again as the doctors pumped my stomach and gave me a shot of a stimulant to the heart. The light went away, the spirits were there no more, and I came to in an emergency room. That's what it's all about! I said to myself as I lay there on the bed. I didn't feel I'd been dead long enough to have a classic near-death experience, but at least I got close enough to see the city limits. I was oddly pleased. After defining, naming, and studying near-death experiences, I could now say I'd had one and, yes, it was real .... I did not go into blackness, as so many assume will happen. Rather, I found myself in a richer, deeper, and more real state of consciousness. I had gone somewhere that so many have described as heaven. The next day I was transferred to a short-stay psychiatric facility. I expected nothing ...*

However, he was finally diagnosed with myxedema, and was able to begin a healing journey in his life.

He was able to turn a tragic situation: his illness and suicide attempt, into a life-giving energy for himself and others.

It is fortunate that he has continued to live, as he has emerged into many fascinating new areas of near-death studies, and had some experiences we'll look at next week.

What can we learn the life of this amazing man? He followed his intuitive guidance even as a medical student who felt drawn to record people's experiences of near death. He anticipated considerable derision from the medical profession, but actually enhanced his career and started a new field of study.

Through these years, he was struggling with a serious, debilitating illness. He was snatched from the jaws of a suicide death to return to health and to his incredible research. Let's be inspired by his life, to bring his faith and hope into our everyday lives.

## *INSPIRATION AND PRAYER:*

by [Rev. Judith](#)



Inspiration & Prayer for 9/16/12:

For inspiration this week I invite you to look at love from your own experience. What is the difference between your love for friends, family your mate, God? Are they all the same or are they different for you? What does love your neighbor feel like? Raymond Moody explains in his interviews that one of the common things that one who has an "nde" is left with that the most important thing we leave behind is our love when we die...everything is not important on the other side....only the people we love and our concern for them. The interesting regrets are in the review of your life is needing to Lovemore. The rest, property, prestige, job, things do not matter. This is a good one to contemplate. How can I love more

"Dear God, thank you for all the people in my life. Give me the capacity to love all, friend and foe alike without judgment. Help me to love as Jesus loved with my whole heart. Help me to be compassionate and kind to all even those who do not like me and those I do not like. Let me serve you with a humble heart. Show me the way." Amen.

Love, and prayers, rev Judith

*Psychomanteum: the ghost in the mirror*

September 23, 2012

## Readings

From the Bible

Rev. 21

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

From Swedenborg

TCR 6:1,2

Still the Divine, which is the inmost and is covered by such things as are accommodated to the perceptions of angels and; men, shines forth like light through crystals, but varied according to the state of mind which a man has formed for himself, either from God or from himself. With every one who has framed his mind according to the Divine Will, the Sacred Scripture is like a mirror in which he sees God, but each in his own way. That mirror is composed of truths which a man learns from the Word and according to which he fashions his life.

## MESSAGE

### Psychomanteum: *The Ghost in the Mirror*

by Rev. Wilma Wake

Twenty years after publishing *Life After Life*, Dr. Raymond Moody was a well-respected researcher into near-death experiences. However, he was not satisfied. NDE's are rare, and there is no way to reproduce them in a laboratory for research.

He was especially intrigued by what happens when the experiencer encounters a "dead" friend or relative. So many people in grief longed for such an encounter. Moody writes:

*The ability to facilitate an apparition, if you will, was beyond the grasp of medical science. Then one day the answer landed on me, literally. I was browsing the dusty shelves of a used-book store in a small Georgia town. Spying an old book in the psychology section that looked interesting, I reached to pull it down from a high shelf and the book next to it slid out and fell at my feet. I picked up the book and looked at its title: Crystal Gazing. ... Ordinarily I would have put the book back on the shelf and been done with it. But on this particular day I had time to let my mind roam, and I decided to do so with this fascinating tome by a scholar named Northcote Thomas.*

As he read the book, he became fascinated by the possibilities of "crystal gazing." He learned that many cultures throughout history have used crystals, mirrors, and clear water to gaze into psychic depths. It is a techniques called "scrying." He researched the ancient Greeks – a culture he had come to love through his study of philosophy when he was in college. He learned that the Greeks had created cave chambers called "psychomanteums" where a person could spend weeks in order to connect with a deceased loved one. They were called "oracles of the dead" and people would travel from long distances to contact the dead.

After reading the work of Thomas, and other historians, he began to wonder if he could make this "art" into a modern science. Moody wrote:

*Herodotus is one of my favorite writers the first historian. And so I remembered that Herodotus wrote about a place called the Oracle of the Dead. I didn't remember that they called it the Oracle of the Dead, all I remembered was that Herodotus described the place where somebody sent a delegation and that they saw a ghost there. ... And then I remembered a similar thing in The Odyssey, where Circe sends Odysseus to a place to conjure up the spirits ...*

Moody had to try this for himself. He used a small closet to build a small booth. He put a mirror on the wall and put in minimal lighting.

He wanted to see Grandmother Waddleton, his maternal grandmother. He took a long walk and ate a good breakfast. He spent the day looking at photos of his grandmother and remembering all the things he loved about her. He spent two hours gazing into the mirror in the dim light. Nothing. He was discouraged. He writes

*I went downstairs to the living room. It was twilight now, and the experience of scrying had left me surprisingly tired. I remember sitting on the couch, thinking of nothing at all. Suddenly a woman walked into the room! It took me a moment to realize that this was not my maternal grandmother, Grandmother Waddleton, but my paternal grandmother, Grandmother Moody, who had died several years earlier. "Grandma!" I exclaimed, throwing my hands up to my face. I was awestruck. ...*

*We spoke. I heard her, although what I heard came to my ears with a crisp, electric quality that was louder and clearer than her voice had been before she died. Although we spoke and I could hear her, I was immediately aware of what she was saying even before she said it, which has led me to describe this experience as "mind-to-mind" communication. She did not appear ghostly or transparent but was completely solid. And she was much younger in physical appearance than when she died. In fact, she appeared much younger than I had ever seen her. Still, I recognized her, and I would recognize her today if I saw her on the street. This was my father's mother. We discussed our family, and she revealed family secrets that I didn't know but that explained many events in my childhood. I choose not to reveal them here, other than to say that these revelations explained some of the dysfunction that has been*

[Moody, Raymond; Perry, Paul (2012-02-07). *Paranormal: My Life in Pursuit of the Afterlife* (pp. 179-180). Harper Collins, Inc.. Kindle Edition.]

After that astounding experience, Moody had to develop an experimental protocol to see if others could communicate with the dead. He was not overly-optimistic. He thought that perhaps 10 percent of subjects would actually have a paranormal experience.

He was wrong. He found that over 50 percent did. He purchased a house in the country which he converted into a psychomanteum, and he advertised for subjects. He selected ten subjects, and spent one day with of them over a ten day period. He writes this about his experiment:

*The picture that emerged was vastly different from what I expected. Of the ten pioneers ushered through this process, five had powerful apparitions of dead relatives. And all of them believed that they had actually seen their departed loved one and communicated with that person. The first subject's experience is still the most amazing to me because it showed that my technique truly worked, although in this case it worked in an unexpected way. I will call this first subject Ruth. She was a forty-four-year-old nurse whose husband had died two years earlier of a heart attack. She prepared to see him by following my suggestion that she bring along a photo album of their marriage and several mementos. We spent several hours talking about Ruth's husband and preparing her to see him, but when she came out of the mirror-gazing booth, she told me with great bewilderment that she had seen her father instead of her husband, and that "Dad" had actually emerged from the mirror to talk with her. Another of these early patients went into the mirror and arrived at a structure. ....*

*I too was stunned at the results as I realized that the psychomanteum offered an exciting form of grief therapy. Instead of having to talk to a therapist about the loss of a loved one, a person in the psychomanteum could talk directly to the loved one.*

[Moody, Raymond; Perry, Paul (2012-02-07). *Paranormal: My Life in Pursuit of the Afterlife* (pp. 198-199). Harper Collins, Inc.. Kindle Edition.]

Additional research has since been done, especially by the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. Here is a brief description of that research:

*Can trying to contact a deceased loved one ease the pain of grief and bereavement? The answer is yes, according to research conducted by psychology professor Arthur Hastings, at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California. Dr. Hastings and his research team took 27 persons through a three hour process with the intention of contacting a friend or loved one who had died. After the experience almost all the individuals had significantly less grief, guilt, sadness, loss, and need to communicate compared to their previous feelings. Half of the participants said they had felt the presence of the person they sought. The research has just been published in the winter issue of Omega, a professional journal on death and dying, and is the first to scientifically measure this process. During the mirror meditation, 13 persons felt they had a contact from the persons who had died, including messages, visions, touches, and a feeling of presence. The study used standard psychological measures and ratings before and after the sessions to measure the reduction in bereavement.*

A psychologist involved in that research who now uses the techniques in clinical practice is Dr. Irene Blinston. She maintains a website about her grief work in helping clients contact deceased loved ones.

What do you think about all of this?

I admit to being dubious. I was hesitant to use this material as part of a Sunday message, as it did not seem well-researched to me. But, then, it is part of the body of work by the esteemed Dr. Raymond Moody, whom we have been featuring this month. It does have ancient roots. And the concept of this type of communication is certainly consistent with Swedenborg's theology.

Do you have any knowledge or experience in this area to share? What do you think Swedenborg would say about Moody'

### *PRAYER:*

by Rev. Judith

Inspiration for the week of September 23, 2012:

"Lord, In thinking about our lives and days ahead , let us turn our minds over to you to expand grow our thinking. Keep us focused on goods and truths of our internal sense, keep us in the light of your love. When we are angry or resentful help us to remember to pray, "Bless them, Change me."  
Thank you for everything in our lives both good and bad for they teach us to live more spiritually each day. May blessings abound for each and all that touch my life in any way.

AMEN."

Love, Rev. Judith



## Happy Birthday, Johnny Appleseed

September 30, 2012

### Readings

Mark 4:1-9, 26-29 (New Living Translation)

1 Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. 2 He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

3 "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. 4 As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. 5 Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. 6 But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn't have deep roots, it died. 7 Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. 8 Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" 9 Then he said, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

26 Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. 28 The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. 29 And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."

True Christian Religion #586

586. That people can only be regenerated gradually, may be illustrated by each and all things that come into existence in the natural world. A tree cannot reach its full growth in a day, but there is first growth from the seed, then from the root, and then from the shoot, which becomes the trunk, and from this go forth branches and leaves, and finally blossoms and fruit. Wheat or barley does not ripen for the harvest in a day; a house is not built in a day, nor does a person acquire their full stature in a day, still less their wisdom...

### MESSAGE

Johnny Chapman was born in Leominster, Massachusetts, on September 26, 1774 to Elizabeth and Nathaniel Chapman. They named their son "John." Less than a year later, he was baptized in the Congregational Church. When John was two, his mother died, so John and his sister were raised by relatives until the summer of 1780, when their father was honorably discharged from the Continental Army. That same summer he married Lucy Cooley of Longmeadow, Massachusetts. John and Elizabeth came to live with them in a small house that became quite crowded with the births of ten more children.

What did Elizabeth and John make of their new circumstances?

*If local lore is right, they moved into a small, plain, rectangular frame home that dates back to at least 1695. For the four of them— two children, then ten and not quite six, freshly reacquired father, and new stepmother— the house certainly would have been satisfactory, and clearly there were opportunities for schooling in Longmeadow, quite possibly for Elizabeth to continue*

*hers and for John to start his. But one guesses that what Elizabeth and John were most likely to have recalled in later life about their growing years in Longmeadow were the agonies of childbirth, the constant bawling of children, and the ever-diminishing personal space in their living quarters.*

[Means, Howard (2011-04-12). *Johnny Appleseed* (Kindle Locations 481-483). Simon & Schuster, Inc... Kindle Edition.]

When John was 18, he felt a strong yearning to “go west”, and persuaded his half-brother; eleven-year-old Nathaniel, to join him in the adventure.

He took on the profession of “nurseryman.” Along the way, he encountered the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg [who had died in 1772].

When and how did Johnny encounter the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg?

This is the theory of Howard Means in his book, [Johnny Appleseed: the Man, the Myth, the American Story](#).

*By 1785, Hetty and her father had started a reading circle in their Philadelphia home and print shop at 116 High Street, today's Market Street. .... John Young, who also had been present at James Glen's first talk and was a fellow member of the Bailey household reading circle, was courting Francis Bailey's other adopted daughter, Maria Barclay, Hetty's niece perhaps or maybe only her cousin. John and Maria were married in November 1794 at the Old Swedes' Church in Philadelphia and soon moved west themselves, all the way across the Alleghenies to Greensburg, some thirty miles east of Pittsburgh. As Hetty had done, the Young's established their own reading circle to discuss and promote Swedenborg's teachings. And it appears to have been there, in Greensburg, either at John Young's white wooden house at Second and Main Streets or at his nearby country cottage, “Skara Glen,” that John Chapman first seriously encountered Emanuel Swedenborg, sometime not long after the start of the new century.*

Means, Howard (2011-04-12). *Johnny Appleseed* (Kindle Locations 1515-1523). Simon & Schuster, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

In many ways, the New Church was an unlikely match for Johnny.

*The New Church that Chapman found in western Pennsylvania was rooted in almost his polar opposite. Francis Bailey, the foster father and father-in-law of the two women and a man who were helping carry the Church west, was a person of considerable substance and wealth. He and his wife, Eleanor, would have their likenesses painted by Charles Willson Peale, then the most celebrated portraitist in the nation. John Young wasn't far behind. He had arrived in America in the early 1780s almost empty-pocketed after paying off his brother's gambling debts, but his father had been a highly successful cloth merchant back in Glasgow, and Young himself had clerked in the paying off his brother's gambling debts, but his father had been a highly successful cloth merchant back in Glasgow, and Young himself had clerked in the Edinburgh offices of Sir Walter Scott's father before leaving for America. In Philadelphia, Young quickly found work in the law offices of Stephen Du Ponceau and must have prospered there, because*



he and his new wife had their wedding portraits painted by none other than Gilbert Stuart— two of the more than one thousand portraits Stuart executed of the leading political and social figures of the day.

Means, Howard (2011-04-12). *Johnny Appleseed (Kindle Locations 1530-1534)*. Simon & Schuster, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

The very first General Convention of our denomination was in Philadelphia in 1817. Shortly before this first convention convened, there was a fascinating article in a Swedenborgian newsletter from England:

*There is in the western country a very extraordinary missionary of the New Jerusalem. A man has appeared who seems to be almost independent of corporeal wants and sufferings. He goes barefooted, can sleep anywhere, in house or out of house, and live upon the coarsest and most scanty fare. He has actually thawed ice with his bare feet. He procures what books he can of the New Church Swedenborg, travels into the remote settlements, and lends them wherever he can find readers, and sometimes divides a book into two or three parts for more extensive distribution and usefulness. This man for years past has been in the employment of bringing into cultivation, in numberless places in the wilderness, small patches (two or three acres) of ground, and then sowing apple seeds and rearing nurseries. These become valuable as the settlements approximate, and the profits of the whole are intended for the purpose of enabling him to print all the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and distribute them through the western settlements of the United States."*

He became active in Ohio, where the government was giving land grants to people from Canada and Nova Scotia who had fought on our side in the Revolutionary War. Johnny was planting trees before settlers even arrived. He continued westward, planting trees, just ahead of the wave of immigration.

Chapman was not a dreamy wanderer. He was organized and careful in his business dealings. He bought and sold many tracts of land and planted apple orchards in advance of the Westward migration.

*John Chapman didn't simply walk around the countryside planting seeds and communing with nature. He was methodical in the selection of his nursery sites and the planting of his seeds. By instinct, he practiced the Van Mons theory of improving fruit by seeding rather than by grafting or budding. He always selected a good loamy piece of ground in an open place, fenced it in with fallen trees and logs, bushes and vines, sowed his seeds, and returned at regular intervals to repair the fence, to tend the ground, and to sell his trees.*

Johnny felt that he was called to be a missionary. He visited cabins to heal, give advice, offer comfort, and share the writings of Swedenborg..

Johnny made friends with many of the Indian tribes and learned many of their languages. He was held in high esteem by the Native Americans. Some of tribes he

may have connected with include: the Wyandot Indians, the Delaware [Lenape] Indians, the Miami Indianans, and the Iroquois (Mingo) Indians

He became a peacemaker between the Indians and the settlers with his loving ways towards his neighbors. John Chapman, or Johnny Appleseed as he became affectionately called, died in Fort Wayne, Indiana, after more than 50 years of travel. His path through the East and Midwest now has many monuments to the memory of this man who sowed the seeds of apple trees and the seeds of God's word.

As an elderly man, he returned home to Ohio in 1842. He died there 3 years later, and was buried near Ft. Wayne.

What was there about Johnny [Chapman] Appleseed's life that exemplifies Swedenborgian theology? Here are some things to consider:

1. He lived both with his heart and his mind. He learned about his profession and the Van Mons theory of planting fruit as seed rather than grafting. He learned what kind of soil the trees needed, and he would go back often to check on the growth of his trees. Yet all that he did was focused in his love of people and of the Lord. He felt that he was called to be a preacher and healer; to help God care for people on the plains. He also planted medicinal herbs, and often shared them on his journeys. Swedenborg said that both Love and Wisdom are central to life. They represent spirit-matter; God-humanity; heart-mind. We must bring these "dualisms" into oneness in our lives.
2. He was friend of all. He learned many Indian languages and was held in high regard by many of the tribes. He cared about the concerns of both the Indian tribes and the white settlers, and often intervened in conflict. He never killed – either people or animals. He lived in complete harmony with nature. "In field and meadow and forest, he walked, concerned with the spacious thoughts of God. The singularity of his thinking and his living was inextricably entwined with his religious views". Swedenborg emphasizes our oneness with all creation; we are part of a web of existence and we contribute to and are nurtured by the whole.
3. His life was focused on "uses". He lived to be of service to others. Yet, he also attended to his own needs and, as always, that inner leading. He made a living, but money was not his motivation. He would accept cash for his trees – or clothing or food or even nothing at all. He never asked a person to pay a debt, for he reasoned that if God wanted him to have the money, God would move the customer to pay. Besides, the customer knew that he or she owed the money, without being reminded of it. However, he was not poor, and had some assets that he rarely used.

Swedenborg tells us that Love and Wisdom must be expressed by our living a life of useful service to others.

4. He lived by the guidance of his inner calling. Swedenborg tells us that God's Love is always inflowing to our very being and essence. We can connect with the Divine by

looking inward, to find the deep guidance at the depth of our soul. For there we find our deepest love and passion; and it is out of this that we live in oneness with God and the world.

How can Johnny's life inspire our lives today?

I guess that gets me back to apples! What better expresses the Divine than a tiny seed so full of its potential to become nurturing, glorious, and useful? Those apple trees and their fruit provide many of us with shade, with food, with spiritual sustenance. This might be a good today to enjoy some apples ... and give a few seeds to your friends to start more apple trees!

## *PRAYER & INSPIRATION*

by Rev. Judith



Inspiration & Prayer for 9/30/12:

Johnny Appleseed spent his life spreading Love and Beauty through out his world. He gave spiritual support to those he met by sharing pages of Swedenborg's writings. He dispersed beauty by planting so many trees, and he fed those that lived near the planted the trees. This is a wonderful metaphor us. Think about it, can you imagine yourself there? What could you do to follow this example in your life today? If nothing else to celebrate his life we could practice gratitude for the example and the blessings on our lives today.

"Father/Mother God, who created this wonderful planet for us to live on, we thank you for the nature we live in, the food we have to eat, the shelter we have each day and the clothing we wear on our backs. You have blessed us mightily with so much love. Let us spread this love through out our lives like planting seeds that will grow and touch others. Let us be Johnny Appleseed's in spreading acts of mercy and compassion. Let us step out boldly into the wilderness places of our lives and plant beauty, truth, wisdom and Love. AMEN."

Love, Rev. Judith



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

## ***Psychic Anatomy***

***October 7, 2012***

### ***Readings***

FROM THE BIBLE

## **Genesis 21**

New International Version (NIV)

### **The Birth of Isaac**

<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac<sup>[a]</sup> to the son Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup> And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

## **Matthew 6**

New International Version (NIV)

### **Treasures in Heaven**

<sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,<sup>[c]</sup> your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eyes are unhealthy,<sup>[d]</sup> your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

<sup>24</sup> "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

### **Do Not Worry**

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



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

## MESSAGE

### PSYCHIC ANATOMY

by Rev. Dr. David Fekete



Our personalities are made up of two basic components: the will and the understanding. We experience these two categories as our emotions and our thinking. Modern psychology and education call these categories affective and cognitive. And the great Eastern religions refer to them as yin and yang. Of these two general qualities of our psyche, Swedenborg seems to value the will as fundamental to who we are.

Our culture values intelligence. We often complement people on their smarts. But how often do we compliment people on being loving? How often do we say, “Bob has a lot of heart”? And if we did, would we even consider it a compliment? Would we care as much about Bob’s heart as we would his brain?

But it is our emotions that truly make up who we are. We can think up great thoughts, but home is where the heart is. Our lives are made up of what we love. We can’t do anything unless we have some emotion motivating us. Even in our understanding, we can’t think of anything unless we are somehow connected to it through a love, or an emotion. So Swedenborg can say that our love is our very life. It is such an important doctrine that it is the very first statement Swedenborg makes in his book *Divine Love and Wisdom*.

*... Love is his very life; not only the general life of his whole body, and the general life of all his thoughts, but also the life of all their particulars. This a man of discernment can perceive when it is said: If you remove the affection which is from love, can you think anything, or do anything? (DLW 1)*

We can raise our thought processes up even into the light of heaven. We can think very elevated ideas, and talk with great insight, but unless we incorporate these ideas into our lives, these great ideas will be forgotten. For we will ultimately fall back on what we love. We will end up doing what we like, what we enjoy, what gives us pleasure. Again from *Divine Love and Wisdom*:

*In the world it is believed that the understanding makes the man; but this is believed because the understanding can*

*be elevated . . . into the light of heaven, giving man the appearance of being wise; yet so much of the understanding as transcends, that is to say, so much as is not of the love, although it appears to be man's and therefore to determine man's character, is only an appearance. For so much of the understanding as transcends is, indeed, from the love of knowing and being wise, but not at the same time from the love of applying to life what man knows and is wise in. Consequently, in the world it either passes away or lingers outside of the things in the memory . . . and therefore after death it is separated, no more of it remaining than is in accord with the spirit's own love. (DLW 368)*

We need to live according to what we know. We need to apply the things we know into our lives. Only when we live what we know, will our knowledge stay with us. Only those thoughts that we incorporate into our lives stay with us. Then they become part of who we are. Then they become a part of our souls.

Now I mentioned above that we can lift up our thinking even into the light of heaven. Our understanding is a separate function from our will. We can know a lot more than we can live. But there is an important reason for this distinction between our thinking and our emotions, or to use Swedenborg's language, between our understanding and our will. It is our thinking that modifies our emotional life. Our thinking guides our emotional lives. We can understand what we should do long before we get ourselves to actually do what we should do. Our understand guides and modifies our will.

Some people will say, "That's just the way I am, and there's nothing I can do about it." Well it's a good thing that's not true. The truth is, we can do something about it. We can actually modify our emotions. We can change. We can grow emotionally.

In fact, for the sake of our souls, we need to grow emotionally. This is the significance of the circumcision ritual we heard today in the Isaac story. Circumcision symbolizes the purification of our heart. It symbolizes emotional growth. The ritual of circumcision was commanded by God to the Hebrew people. It was a way to mark a boy's entrance into the Jewish religion, and it is still practiced today as a holy ritual. Devout Jews will have a Rabbi circumcise their children, rather than a doctor. But like Christian baptism, circumcision doesn't guarantee salvation. We baptize children to mark their entrance into Christianity. But sober reflection on baptism will indicate that baptism doesn't guarantee salvation. We need to live a Christian life to truly be considered Christian. So circumcision symbolizes the purification of our heart. It represents emotional growth. Swedenborg comments on this ritual in AC 2634:

*It was according to divine order that every male should be circumcised on the eighth day from his birth; not that circumcision was of any avail, or that they who were circumcised would enter the kingdom of God before the uncircumcised; but because such a rite in the representative church corresponded to purification of the heart; . . . It is of divine order that the heart, that is, man's interiors, should be purified gradually and continually from the evils of lusts, and from the falsities and fantasies therefrom. The precepts relating to the purification of the heart are all things of divine order. As far, therefore, as man lives in those precepts, so far he lives in divine order . . . hence the man becomes a little heaven corresponding to the greatest.*

Notice Swedenborg's emphasis on life. We need to live according to the religious precepts we know in order for us to become heavenly beings

We are not slaves to our desires. We can modify our behavior. As they say in AA, if nothing changes, nothing changes. It is an unpopular doctrine of Swedenborg's that we start out self-interested and grow into a love for others and for God. Of course we know that all children are innocent. And we don't attribute sinfulness to little children. But they are just that—they are children. And when they stop being children, then we are dealing with a different person altogether. This happens dramatically as a child enters their teen years.

It is natural and good, that we take healthy interest in ourselves and in the material world. We begin our adult lives when we start to fend for ourselves. We need to look out for our own interests and we need to care about the material world. It only becomes a problem when we get stuck in this mind-set. A spiritually mature adult needs to care about others, and loves his Maker. Usually—but not always—as a person moves into middle adulthood, their material needs are reasonably settled. We have a steady job, and usually enough to get by. We can start looking at the greater world around us, and realize that other people matter for their own sakes. And our early self-interest is replaced with God-interest. This is how Swedenborg describes spiritual maturation:

*From birth man loves nothing but self and the world . . . This love could not be separated from its impurity unless man*

*had a power to raise his understanding into the light of heaven, and to see how he ought to live in order that his love, as well as his understanding, may be elevated into wisdom. By means of the understanding, love, that is, the man, sees what the evils are that defile and corrupt the love; he also sees that if he flees from those evils as sins and turns away from them, he loves the things that are opposite to those evils; all of which are heavenly. . . . Then so far as love gives heaven the first place and the world the second, and at the same gives the Lord the first place and self the second, so far love is purged of its uncleanness and is purified; in other words, is raised into the heat of heaven, and conjoined with the light of heaven . . . . (DLW 419)*

These days, we don't like hearing about words like sin, or evil. Modern psychology wants to turn any character defect into some kind of sickness that therapy can cure. Now much good is done through therapy, and many things we call evil may well be personality disorders that psychology can help adjust. But as a theologian, I accept the unpopular words "sin" and "evil". When we think about terrible acts like child abuse, or sexual assault, what else can we think of but evil. Then there are the 10 commandments. They give us a wonderful checklist for our spiritual lives. We need to resist evil impulses because they are sins against God, if we are to progress spiritually. If we do it for other motives, such as so that we'll have a good reputation, or so we will be respected by others, then we are not acting from godly motives. The good we do is tainted by self-interest. We become angels when we do good because we love what is good in and of itself. Consider AC 2657,

*The first rational, in the beginning, knows no other love than that of the self and the world; and although it hears that heavenly love is altogether of another character, it still does not comprehend it. But then, when the man does any good, he perceives no other enjoyment from it than that he may seem to himself to merit the favor of another, or may hear himself called a Christian, or may obtain from it the joy of eternal life. The second rational, however, with which he is gifted by the Lord through regeneration, begins to feel some enjoyment in good and truth itself, and to be affected by this enjoyment, not for the sake of anything of his, but for the sake of the good and truth; and when he is led by this enjoyment, he then disclaims merit, . . . This enjoyment grows with him step by step, and becomes blessed; and in the other life it becomes happiness, and is itself his heaven. (AC 2657)*

So we are able to think wonderful thoughts so that we can live as better people. We are not saved by good thinking. We are angelic when we put into practice the religious precepts we know. Then our thoughts become one with our heart. We love what we know. We have an understanding so that we can grow emotionally. We can modify our behavior. We're not stuck with a child's emotional life. Our emotions can change and grow. We can become better and better people. And you know what the good part is? The good part is that we will enjoy life better when we are living a God-centered life. If we persevere, doing good will make us happy, much, much happier than we ever can be when we live selfish lives. Home is where the heart is. And a heart centered on God will be blessed and supremely happy. Amen.

## PRAYER & INSPIRATION

by Rev. Judith



Inspiration and prayer for 10/7/12:  
In contemplating this days sermon,

have you been living your life for God or yourself? Have you ever turned your brain over to God each day and asked in prayer to have God direct your thinking? Have you ever asked God to show you how to love? How to Think? Have you depended solely on Him?

Try it you might like it. Hummmmm.  
"Dear God as we go through out our daily tasks help us to focus on being truly one with you. Living each day as you would have us live it. Give us to strength to look at ourselves with a discerning eye so that we may grow and change daily in our love for you and in our focus of our minds. As we hear so often, help us to do your will. Thank you for our growth and our communion with you. AMEN."  
Love, Rev Judith





## *The Brain's Spiritual World*

*October 14, 2012*

# READINGS

Scripture: Mark 11: 23-26

**23***For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*

**24***Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

**25***And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

**26***But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*

Swedenborg:

**4054.** *The brain, like heaven, belongs to the realm of ends which are uses, for whatever flows in from the Lord is an end looking towards the salvation of the human race. This is the end which reigns in heaven, and also which as a result reigns in the brain, for the brain, where man's mind is seated, looks to ends in the body, that is to say, so that the body may serve the soul and that the soul may be eternally happy.*

## MESSAGE

Did you know that this past week was Mental Illness Awareness Week? The first week of October was declared MIAW in 1990 by the Congress through the efforts of NAMI – National Alliance for Mental Illness.

NAMI developed a special section called Faith Net, to highlight the importance of spirituality in healing from mental illness. NAMI FaithNet provides resources, tools and encouragement for faith communities and for individuals to support healing from mental illness.

Our worship theme this year is The Year of the Spiritual World. The human brain is, itself, a world -- and its spiritual riches are just becoming known to scientists.

### **STUDIES ON SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL ILLNESS**

On their web site, they give the results of studies on the role of spirituality in healing from mental health.

*When NAMI asked individuals living with schizophrenia and depression, in two separate surveys, what components are most important in their mental illness recovery, survey respondents of both NAMI's Schizophrenia: Public Attitudes, Personal Needs in 2008 and Depression: Gaps and Guideposts in 2009 reported prayer and spirituality as primary, just below medication, psychotherapy or counseling and, for depression, exercise.*

*Forty percent of respondents living with depression reported spirituality as a primary form of treatment. Additionally, a majority reported that participation in their spiritual or religious practices had not been adversely affected by their depression.*

*For individuals living with schizophrenia, 38 percent reported a greater connection to religious or spiritual practices as part of their treatment and recovery.*

A recent study from the University of Missouri examined recovery experiences of people from five faith traditions: Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Catholics and Protestants.

*Surveys were conducted of individuals self-reporting their physical health and mental health and highlight the relationship between these two conditions. Across all five practices, a greater degree of spirituality was related to better mental health and despite differences in beliefs among the world's main religions, the study reveals that spirituality enhances health regardless.*

*"Our prior research shows that the mental health of people recovering from different medical conditions ... appears to be related significantly to positive spiritual beliefs and especially congregational support and spiritual interventions," said Dan Cohen, assistant teaching professor of religious studies at MU and one of the co-authors of the study.*

### **RELATIONSHIP OF MIND AND SPIRIT**

Researchers have learned that meditation causes real changes in the brain; it can lead one to a "God spot" of deep peace, love, and healing.

*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'.*

Increasingly "neuro theologians" are learning that many forms of meditation, prayer, and experience with the arts can lead us to this spot.

Art therapists are finding that drawing, singing, dancing and other arts can lead us to God's spot.

### **SWEDENBORG'S PERSPECTIVE**

All of this, of course, is what our Swedenborg wrote about over 300 years ago. He believed that all of heaven was like a Grand Person, with each part of the body playing a special role. The brain is particularly important:

*"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."*

It was important to Swedenborg to allow opposites to work together:

*science and religion  
matter and spirit  
wisdom and love  
humanity and God*

what we consider dualities are, in fact, a holographic whole. Within that whole, they are "distinguishably one." Each quality continues to exist in its uniqueness, and they blend into a wholeness that cannot exist without both of them.

This concept is a perfect way to understand the human brain. We have two parts to our brain: right and left. To be whole, we have to embrace each side. Yet, we live in a culture that honors the left brain and ignores the right. Sometimes, a stroke or brain injury or mental illness has pushed a person into their right brain where creativity lives. We cannot find our "God spot" of love and peace

without using the right side of the brain.

How is your spiritual life impacted by your brain? Does/has your spirituality helped you in healing from physical and/or mental illnesses?

## *PRAYER & INSPIRATION*



by Rev. Judith  
Inspiration and Prayer for October 14, 2012:

This past week has been a difficult one for many of you with many challenges facing you so.....  
Today's inspiration is to follow your heart in all that you do, living each day with the best of you and sharing your compassion in all that comes up during the day. See what happens for you with this practice. When day is too much, find a quiet place in nature and give the stress to Mother Earth. Then resume your mindfulness of sharing your heart and your authentic self.

"Dear God, thank you for this day and week of opportunity to know my own heart and share my authentic self. Give me the serenity to face life's challenges with peace and the knowledge that you are my director and guide in all things.....doing your will with all my heart is the gift of every day. May we be blessed with fullness of your Love, the strength of your Will and protection of your Grace. AMEN."

Love, Light and Peace,  
Rev. Judith

**Healing the Mind**

**October 21, 2012**

**READINGS**

Scripture:

Isaiah 68

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?  
7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?  
8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness[a] will go before you,  
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.  
9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.*

Swedenborg:

Divine Providence (Dick and Pulsford) n. 282282. *It would have been possible for the Lord to heal the understanding in every man, and so cause him to think not evil but good, and this by means of fears of various kinds, by miracles, by conversations with the dead, and by visions and dreams. But to heal the understanding alone is to heal man outwardly only; for the understanding with its thought is the external of man's life, while the will with its affection is the internal of his life. Therefore, the healing of the understanding alone would be like palliative healing, by which the interior malignity, shut in and prevented from coming out, would destroy first the near and then the remote parts till the whole would become mortified. It is the will itself that must be healed, not by means of an influx into it of the understanding, for that is not possible, but by means of instruction and exhortation by the understanding. If the understanding alone were healed man would become like a dead body embalmed, or covered over with fragrant spices and roses, which would soon draw from the body such a foul odour that they could not be brought near anyone's nostrils. So would it be with heavenly truths in the understanding if the evil love of the will were denied outlet.*



## MESSAGE



by Rev. Wilma

We have been talking about healing from mental illness. Today, we're going to look at the journey of real people have found healing through their spirituality.

We first told the story two year ago. Here is what we hear about then:

***My Son .....***

***by Phyllis***

***..... was always a happy-go-lucky kid.***

***However, his senior year of high school we and the staff at his high school began to notice a change in Erik. He began to develop a shorter and shorter fuse and would become angry with the other students as well as the staff. This was so unlike him. He also wore a beanie 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We just figured he was a teenage boy and it was his favorite beanie.***

***Around Christmas 2009 he was asked to remove his beanie for a picture. He became very anxious and wanted to leave. We realized then there was definitely something more going on. He finally told us that he hated his ears. They stuck out, kids made fun of him, and he was ugly. There wasn't any truth to any of this but it was very real to him. He was struggling in school and we told him that, as a graduation present, we would pay for otoplasty (ear pinning) if it was that important to him. We figured even though we weren't seeing it, it was worth it if it was affecting his life to that degree. He had the otoplasty and everything was great....for about three weeks. Then when he would look in the mirror, which was all the time, he was unhappy with the job the surgeon did, his ears still were huge, and he needed otoplasty revision. I made the comment to him, "If you do anything more to your ears, they will look like Michael Jackson's nose." When I said that a little bell went off in my head. I remember reading about some strange disorder it was believed that Michael Jackson suffered from. So, I began googling Michael Jackson, disorder, anything I could think of. It finally took me to a website about Body Dysmorphic Disorder. When I read the symptoms I told my husband, "Oh my gosh, this is Erik!" The disorder had begun to take over his life.***

***His ugliness was all he could talk about and he was miserable. He was having an especially rough day when, on August 31st, 2009 he came into my bedroom shaking and crying and told me he could not live his life like this! I had to believe he was serious. I took him to Behavioral Health and he was admitted because he was suicidal. We were totally blind sided by all this. I had e mailed or phoned anyone and everyone whose name came up associated with the***

*disorder, which I will refer to as BDD from here on. The day that he was admitted a psychiatrist from Stanford who specializes in the disorder called me and provided a wealth of information. He recommended a book called "The Broken Mirror" by Dr. Katherine Phillips which is basically the BDD bible. With his help and the info in the book I was able to understand more about the disorder as well as the proper treatment.*

*When he was released from mental health I insisted that they add BDD to their diagnosis of major depressive disorder and anxiety. Then our quest for help began. Since I was new to this mental illness scene, I thought any psychologist could treat the disorder and any psychiatrist could prescribe the proper medication. Wrong!!!!!! He was drugged to the point he slept all the time and the therapist didn't have a clue how to get through to him. As a mother, I felt totally helpless and I have to say, it was the toughest thing I have ever had to deal with. I wanted so much for him to get better but I couldn't fix it. There was one time, a few months into his treatment, that I looked at my husband and said, "Are we ever going to get our son back? Have we lost him in this world of his forever?"*

This is the story that Erik tells today:

*Two years ago my mother and I wrote about my struggle with body dysmorphic disorder (bdd). I should say our struggle because it affected everyone close to me. For most of you who have never heard of bdd, which is probably most of you, it is an Obsessive Compulsive Spectrum disorder. This is a brief description of what is it like to have BDD.*

*Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), also known as dysmorphophobia, is an under recognized yet relatively common and severe mental disorder that occurs around the world. Patients with BDD believe they look ugly or deformed (thinking, for example, that they have a large and 'repulsive' nose, or severely scarred skin), when in reality they look normal. As a result of their appearance concerns, they may stop working and socializing, become housebound, and even commit suicide. That was me. I obsessed over my ears for hours on end. I thought people were talking about how I looked and making fun of me. I couldn't quit looking in a mirror hoping to see someone who looked normal looking back at me. That didn't happen. Two years ago, I was unable to leave my house, had lost all my friends because I had become so isolated and angry, and even wanted to end my life.*

*The first article we wrote goes more into depth about the treatment and the path to that treatment.*

*Along that path, my mother 'stumbled upon' the Swedenborg web site. She was desperately looking for answers to what was happening to me and how to fix it. The day she 'stumbled upon' the web site was also the week the sermon was on mental illness. Funny how that happens.*

*I read the sermon from last week where it mentions the importance of spirituality in healing. It references research that there is a connection for people recovering from medical conditions and positive spiritual beliefs, congregational support and spiritual interventions. I had a lot of support from my family. I would not be where I am today without my mother. She made everything happen from finding the best doctors to the best therapists and then, making the insurance company pay for it. That was another battle but we won that one, too. I went to Catholic schools and received a 'religious' education. I don't think I really became spiritual until I was faced with this battle. It seemed like every step we took in the recovery process was laid out for us and each door opened that we needed to go through. It took a while but it happened. I have heard it called a coincidence but my Mom calls it a "Godcidence".*



*So, two years later, I am enrolled in college, have my social life back and a really cool girlfriend, and active in a couple of different church youth groups. I am writing a book because I think it is important to help others who are struggling to find their way. I already fought this battle so if I can make it easier for them, then that is what I hope to do. I find that helping others helps me even more. Maybe this is one of those 'uses' that Swedenborg mentions so frequently.*

How did this amazing journey happen?

Erik identifies two aspects of Swedenborgian theology that helped him:

*There were a couple of beliefs that Swedenborgians share that really had an impact on me. God gives everyone the freedom to choose their beliefs and live their lives accordingly. Salvation is available for people of all religions. Whew, that was huge because I was so used to hearing this religion is right and that religion is wrong, etc. Now I know what I thought was right anyway. They are all right; it is how you live your life. The other Swedenborgian teaching that helped me a lot was God is infinitely love and at the center of every life. I know he wasn't some God way up there somewhere when I was going through all this because every single day I felt like my path was being directed. Therapy was the hardest thing I ever had to do but the pay off for all of it was huge. I have my life back and it is better than ever. Now I will let my mother write something.*

Phyllis writes about her journey of prayer:

PRAYER  
by Phyllis

*Then,[after learning of Erik's diagnosis] I began to pray! See, it is times like this when you play Let's Make a Deal with God. I was raised in a Presbyterian Church, attended a Catholic Church for the last ten years, and recently, a Hindu Temple. In between I have attended services at just about every denomination that exists in the world today. I have a copy of, and am reading, many Holy Books. As a result of my quest for knowledge, I began to realize that there isn't any "one true church" but many paths to the same destination. There are many more similarities, than differences, and I chose to focus on the similarities.*

*So, I asked for God to heal my son. I also prayed that he could guide us to the proper mental health professionals.*

*Sometimes, when I would pray, I would pray so hard and so often that I wondered if anyone was even listening to me. Then I realized that I simply wasn't "believing". I was hoping that God would heal my son, and I was asking Him to, but deep inside I had my doubts and I wasn't "believing". That is when I decided to put all my eggs in one basket and all my faith in God. Once I began to do that, I no longer viewed the bumps in the road as anything more than a speed bump. It slowed things down a bit but once we got over that little bump it was full speed ahead. He still has a ways to go but his progress has been amazing. I am so thankful that we were able to diagnose his condition so early, while he was so young and provide the best possible care for him.*

*At first, when I would pray for God to heal Erik, I would pray repeatedly asking for the same thing. Like I said, sometimes I wanted to say, "Hey, is anybody listening?" I seriously started searching the bible for answers. I read Mark 11: 23-26 and Matthew 21:12 and started thinking maybe I am being selfish here, always asking God for something. Why do I keep asking him for the same thing? Am I really not expecting an answer? Maybe there is something in all of*

*this that is being asked of me but I'm not listening. I just keep asking away. Then I started to change the way I prayed. It was more like a conversation with God. Conversations are best when there are two participants and both also listen.*

How does Phyllis look at Erik's journey today? She wrote this a few days ago:

*Well, Erik didn't leave me much to write because I think he said it all very well. The only thing that I might add is that, as a result of this very difficult time in our lives, we have all become different people. I know Erik is a far more caring and compassionate person than he ever was before. He is always willing to reach out to someone via e mail or a BDD web site and give them help and hope. I do think the more we are caring and forgiving of others, the easier it is for God's love and light to guide us. Anger, hatred, being judgmental are all road blocks and it is helpful to work on ourselves first. I know I sure had to and am still a work in progress.*

In what ways do you find inspiration in Erik's story? Do you have a healing story of your own that you would like to share? You can share your thoughts in the discussion at the bottom of the page. [note: you have to be registered to access the discussion. You can easily do that [HERE](#).]

## PRAYER & INSPIRATION



by Rev. Judith  
Inspiration and Prayer for October 21, 2012:

There is nothing so terrible as feeling a sense of powerlessness when we deeply want to help our loved ones through mental or physical illness. It is true that the only way we can help is in prayer, meditation, and belief that we will be heard. Each week it has been my privilege to give you something to inspire and support you in your prayer life. Weekly, I humbly ask in meditation and prayer for God to direct my thought life, and to show me His Will for this week's message. The answers come as I listen for that gentle touch of his hand.

"Holy One, as we spend time with you this week, enlighten us in our prayer life and assist us to listen for your guidance. We ask to get us out of the way when we pray for others and ourselves, so that your will be done for all. We give thanks for the privilege of praying for others. Thank you for the blessings you give us each day in our prayer life and our daily walk with you. AMEN."

Love, Rev. Judith



## **Holographic Healing**

**October 28, 2012**

### **READINGS**

#### **Scripture**

"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." (Psalm 65:9-13)

#### **SWEDENBORG**

Further, in regard to the union of heaven with the human race, it should be realized that the Lord himself is flowing into every individual according to heaven's design – into the individual's most inward and most outward [aspects] alike. ... The former inflow of the Lord is called direct inflow, while the other inflow, which happens to means of spirits, is called indirect inflow ..."[i]

[i] Emanuel Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell, #297.

#### **MESSAGE**



by Rev. Wilma

#### **HOLOGRAPHIC HEALING**

In the last message, we saw how Phyllis and Erik were transformed through a spiritual healing process. Their insight into Swedenborgian theology supported them on this journey.

Now, we will move more deeply into understanding how Swedenborgian theology can help us heal. Let's look at a connection between Swedenborg and today's transpersonal psychology; let's look at holographic healing.

Let's begin with a verse by William Blake:  
To see the world in a grain of Sand  
The universe in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the Palm of your Hand  
And eternity in an Hour

Rev. Dr. George Dole, renowned Swedenborgian scholar, says that that verse reflects this statement from Swedenborg:

*The Divine is the same in the greatest and the smallest things.* [DLW 77]

Dole has found that his study of Swedenborg has led him to exploring a concept from the "new physics": the hologram. He has read works of quantum physicists such as Karl Pribram and David Bohm. 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 ...*

[Sorting Things Out, 77]

Michael Talbot is a quantum physicist who was raised in a Swedenborgian household. He has written about the connection between Swedenborg and the new physics:

*"If Emanuel Swedenborg were alive today, it is very likely that he would consider many of findings of the 'new physics' compatible with his own thought. This is surprising, for many of the concepts arrived at by contemporary physics are so foreign to everyday ways of thinking that it is difficult for modern sensibilities to grasp them." That a man born three centuries ago should articulate them in his writings is nothing short of remarkable.* [A Continuing Vision, p. 443]

Talbot points out that in human history, we have tended to understand something by taking it apart to look at the pieces that make up the whole. However, in a holographic model, taking something apart gives us little models of the wholeness.

Famed scientist Karl Pribram was the first to make a connection between holographic concepts and the brain. His work suggests that even if one part of the brain is damaged, its function exists in every other part of the brain.

Bohm applied the concept to the entire universe. Talbot wrote:

*This then is the holographic paradigm, that both the brain and reality itself are holographic, and ... it is a tribute to Swedenborg's visionary genius that they were already a part of his body of ideas. The universe is a whole, and cannot be broken down into parts.*

This means that all things are connected. Talbot said:

*...perhaps the most astonishing fore-shadowing of new physics concepts in Swedenborg's writings are the similarities between his world view and a revolutionary new way of looking at nature known as the 'holographic paradigm.' [444]*

George Dole offered this summary of this conclusion in his book *Sorting Things Out*: the fact of the hologram enables us to lift out of the mass of Swedenborg's theological corpus a consistent theme centering in the image of intersecting flows. In another chapter of the same book, he added: *In a sense then perhaps the central ethical import of the Swedenborgian version of the holographic model is to point to the possibility of moving beyond the need to define ourselves loves by excluding others, which for me gives a particular clarity to the injunction that I love my neighbor as myself.*

Dole has now moved the conversation clearly into the realm of consciousness and human interaction, and into the realm of transpersonal psychology.

Questions about the relationship between quantum physics and transpersonal psychology have been debated in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* since its inception in 1969. Pribram was part of a conversation with Jacob Needleman in 1978 in which they probed the practical realities of living with quantum consciousness. This conversation put forth the same ethical questions that were intriguing Dole.

Needleman asked: *What would be the role of an idea, like a holographic idea, in actually activating a different way of life? When Buddha came with the idea, or Christ came with Christian formulation of the idea that the personality or the ego is not ultimately real, it didn't seem that more than a few people were able to bring that idea into their own tissues, into their blood, and their life. The problem is ... how to incarnate that idea in my actual life so that I am transformed in the light of that idea.*

The conversation is moving into the arena of ethics that Dole has considered.

Bohm says: *We say we want to change society, but if all the things that are going on around us are only the manifestations of the ground of society, what is this ground itself? The world of society is primarily the outcome of this deep layer of consciousness. Only when that is touched will society change. When that is touched, you touch the whole consciousness of mankind.*

So how does all of this help us understand the healing journeys of Erik and Phyllis? They were able to move beyond the concept of Erik's problem being something unique to him. So often, people struggling with a mental illness try to hide from others, thinking it is something shameful about them.

But, by reaching out to others they found other people with the disorder – many of whom had come to find wholeness in their lives. They went to the holographic level of reality to understand that they were part of a whole, and that whole was the key to healing.

And then, as they healed, they shared their journey with others. By doing this, they changed the consciousness of the whole.

Do we really accept Swedenborg's concept of all of us being part of a divine whole; the divine whole being completely within each of us? If we do accept that, then it means that when Erick and Phyllis undertake a healing journey, it helps all of us heal in some way.

Every event of every day, no matter how small, is part of the wholeness of life. My life is not just about "me" – it is also about "you" – and you and you and you. What I do impacts you at a subatomic level and vice versa.

So Phyllis and Erik healed within the wholeness of the universe; reaching out to others and sharing with others. They became part of the divine conversation.

In what ways does your life help impact the healing journeys of other people?

## PRAYER & INSPIRATION



by Rev. Judith  
Inspiration and Prayer for October 28, 2012:

On Sunday the Lord had a day of rest, so this is what your inspiration is today.....go inside and find the Lord's inspiration for you today.....and just rest.

"Dear Lord, thank you for the day of rest each week where we get to focus on your Love and Wisdom for us. Thank you for the quiet, and sometimes the solitude. We get weary, Lord, of the hustle and bustle of today's world and forget to rest and appreciate this beautiful planet we live on and the changes in nature that happen each year. Let us breathe in the smells of Autumn and enjoy. Thank you for the Blessings. AMEN.

Love, Rev. Judith



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

*The Hurricane and the Lord*

*November 4, 2012*

## READINGS

### Scripture

*This is a responsive reading based on Psalm 46. You are invited to read it with a friend, alternating the lines, or read it aloud yourself, if you wish.*

Psalm 46

1. God is our refuge and strength,\*

**a very present help in trouble.**

2. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,\*

**and though the mountains be toppled into the depths of the sea;**

3. Though its waters rage and foam,\*

**and though the mountains tremble at its tumult.**

4. The LORD of hosts is with us;\*

**the God of Jacob is our stronghold.**

5. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,\*

**the holy habitation of the Most High.**

6. God is in the midst of her;

she shall not be overthrown;\*

**God shall help her at the break of day.**

7. The nations make much ado, and the kingdoms are shaken;\*

**God has spoken, and the earth shall melt away.**

8. The LORD of hosts is with us;\*

**the God of Jacob is our stronghold.**

9. Come now and look upon the works of the LORD,\*

**what awesome things he has done on earth.**



10. It is he who makes war to cease in all the world;\*

**he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear,  
and burns the shields with fire.**

11. "Be still, then, and know that I am God;\*

**I will be exalted among the nations;**

I will be exalted in the earth."

12. The LORD of hosts is with us;\*

**the God of Jacob is our stronghold.**

SWEDENBORG

True Christian Religion (Ager) n. 355355. V. FAITH WITHOUT CHARITY IS NOT FAITH, AND CHARITY WITHOUT FAITH IS NOT CHARITY, AND NEITHER HAS LIFE EXCEPT FROM THE LORD.

It is very evident from their Epistles that it never entered the mind of any of the apostles that the church of this day would separate faith from charity by teaching that faith alone justifies and saves apart from the works of the law, and that charity therefore cannot be conjoined with faith, since faith is from God, and charity, so far as it is expressed in works, is from man. But this separation and division were introduced into the Christian church when it divided God into three persons, and ascribed to each equal Divinity. But that there is no faith apart from charity, nor any charity apart from faith, and that neither has life except from the Lord, will be made clear in the following chapter.

At present, to prepare the way, it shall be shown:

(1) That man can acquire for himself faith.

(2) And also charity.

(3) And also the life of both.

(4) And yet that nothing of faith, of charity, or of the life of either, is from man, but from the Lord alone.



## THE HURRICANE AND THE LORD



by Rev. Wilma

### THE HURRICANE



It was a frightening day in Southern Maine. Hurricane Sandy was blowing our way, and I was worried about many types of possible damage, including power outages. I had my oil lamp and candles and flashlights with extra batteries. I had canned food to last several days, and, of course, a hand-operated can opening. My cell phone was charged. My propane tank was full to operate my propane heater, if needed. I had a kind neighbor call, offering to let me stay with her family if I was frightened. I thanked her, and said I would come down if I got frightened. My dogs, cat, and I snuggled together and waited. My dog Daisy kept walking in circles -- I knew she was sensing something. During the height of the storm, there was intense, howling wind. The windows shook, branches fell from trees. But the power stayed on.

I was thankful, and, with my TV still on, watched the news of the pathway of Sandy. I was so shocked to see the destruction. I watched in horror as homes were flooded, people were left in the dark. I could understand that this was worse hurricane in the Eastern U.S. ever.

Hurricanes happen. We know from Swedenborg's teachings that God does not send destructive weather as a punishment to anyone. We know that bad weather is not something that evil people choose in order to make others suffer.

However, the situation is different now from how it has ever been on the face of the earth. We, as humanity, have more responsibility than ever before for the status of our weather. Time magazine

wrote this:

*The New York Times and other media are calling the events around Superstorm Sandy “once in a generation.” But whose generation are they talking about?*

*We must stop this “once in a generation” thinking. It is dangerous, misleading and irresponsible.*

*Those who still believe that the powerful new floods, fires, droughts and storms are once-in-a-generation events are blocking the way to do something about climate chaos. Perhaps Sandy will finally blow that kind of rhetoric away.*

[Read more: <http://ideas.time.com/2012/10/30/will-we-be-seeing-more-superstorms/#ixzz2BGyJ8FmT>]

There are also outrageous stories from this storm of people refusing help to others. This is the most outrageous story perhaps, carried by CNN:

*CNN's Gary Tuchman reports on a mother whose two young boys were swept away by powerful floodwaters during Hurricane Sandy. She says she asked a man if they could escape the storm inside his house, but he said no. The man believed to live at the house she went to denies having seen the family*

## THE LORD

There are many ways that we can see the healing power of the Lord at work in the hurricane. The Lord, of course, works through each of us, to provide help to others.

Here are some stories from the internet:

MaryBeth Melendez's classmate who lives in New Dorp Beach in New York's Staten Island reached out for help after the storm left the area in shambles. Melendez cooked a meal and mobilized others from her school to bring food to the neighborhood. She says after that, the group became "command central" for people in need of clothes and something to eat.

"Because I'm blind, I want to tell you maybe God blessed me and I can't see the visuals because it hurts. It really hurts...so being here, it's overwhelming. So maybe the blessing is I can't see the broken houses, but I can see their broken hearts," Melendez tells Anderson Cooper.



[Margot Condon](#) is the [NYU](#) Langone Medical Center NICU nurse seen in a picture that went viral this week. In the photo, she's holding a small baby, just 8 hours old, and pumping air into its lungs



outside the hospital during the emergency evacuation. Backup generators failed during Superstorm Sandy and the medical staff was tasked with safely transferring everyone to other facilities.

Jon Candelaria is being hailed as a hero for pulling a man out of rushing floodwaters during Superstorm Sandy. He did what most hope to have the courage to do in a life or death emergency.

*The 25-year-old father was in his family's Upper East Side apartment on Monday night when he looked out the window and saw an SUV taxi lifted by the powerful force of water beneath it. While his mother tried to reach 911 for help, Candelaria went to save the driver who was nearly drowning. The water was up to Candelaria's chest, but he managed to pry open the door, with the driver's help, just in time.*

*Neighbors witnessed the daring rescue. At 6-foot-5, Candelria carried the driver, who was about 5-foot-1, to safety.*

Another story:

*It took a team of at least six people to get the fragile patient safely down nine flights of stairs in the dark. They had to coordinate their movements, each with a different job. The doctor was there, the security guard with an oxygen tank, the father and others assisting. The baby's mother was still hospitalized during the dramatic mission.*

*Condon, a nurse for 36 years, says she remained focused on each step they needed to take, but has never seen anything like it. Anderson talks with her about the ordeal and her training.*

Why are these stories so important? Let's look again at a part of today's reading from Swedenborg: *But that there is no faith apart from charity, nor any charity apart from faith, and that neither has life except from the Lord.*

It is not enough to trust in the Lord's Providence through faith. We must live faith every day. These stories are all examples of how people lived faith through acts of charity; through doing loving actions for others.

Many of you have already done loving actions to help others impacted by this storm. Many of you have been helped by others in your need after this storm. Sometimes we can feel helpless about how to help others. But Swedenborg reminds us that every act -- no matter how small it seems -- impacts the whole.

One thing you can do to help prevent future such storms is to use the earth's resources carefully. We must change the way we use God's natural resources on the earth. "We" -- especially the United States -- are depleting the earth and raising its temperature in ways that makes it less inhabitable for ourselves and for future generations.

We all want to find ways to help those who were most hurt by this hurricane. But part of helping will be to find more ways -- everyday -- that we can, individually and as a society -- move to more earth-friendly living.

Sometimes we dismiss "prayer" as being of help. But prayer always helps; and we can always pray. Below, our prayer minister, Rev. Judith, offers a special prayer for today.

## *PRAYER & INSPIRATION*



by Rev. Judith  
Inspiration and Prayer for November 4, 2012:

This week our focus needs to be on Others.  
Those who are suffering due to Hurricane Sandy.  
We need to help out where we can with Prayers,  
and whatever we can give. But for the Grace of God go I.  
Whatever we are facing in life.....we can get through it  
together. We can do anything with a spirit of Unity  
of Purpose. Ask yourself "How can I Help?"



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

*Blessed Are the Peacemakers*

*November 11, 2012*

**READINGS**

**Scripture**

Isaiah 45:1-7

New International Version (NIV)

45 “This is what the Lord says to his anointed,  
to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of  
to subdue nations before him  
and to strip kings of their armor,  
to open doors before him  
so that gates will not be shut:  
2 I will go before you  
and will level the mountains[a];  
I will break down gates of bronze  
and cut through bars of iron.  
3 I will give you hidden treasures,  
riches stored in secret places,  
so that you may know that I am the Lord,  
the God of Israel, who summons you by name.  
4 For the sake of Jacob my servant,  
of Israel my chosen,  
I summon you by name  
and bestow on you a title of honor,  
though you do not acknowledge me.  
5 I am the Lord, and there is no other;  
apart from me there is no God.  
I will strengthen you,  
though you have not acknowledged me,  
6 so that from the rising of the sun  
to the place of its setting  
people may know there is none besides me.  
I am the Lord, and there is no other.  
7 I form the light and create darkness,  
I bring prosperity and create disaster;  
I, the Lord, do all these things.

Matthew 5:1-12

New International Version (NIV)

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them.

## The Beatitudes

He said:

- 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.
- 5 Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.
- 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute  
you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad,  
because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who  
were before you.

## BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

by

Rev. Dr. David Fekete



This Remembrance Day I have been thinking about the subject of war and peace, and what the Bible says about it. It is not a simple matter to talk about the Biblical view on war. The Bible is a complex book, written over a period of about 2,000 years if we consider the oral traditions that preceded the written text.

There isn't one, simple Biblical message on war and peace. We have Jesus' clear words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God" (Matt 5:9). And this, I think is at the heart of all Jesus' teachings about love, and forgiveness. But He also said, "Do not suppose I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt.

10:34). Then again, when the crowd came to arrest Jesus, armed with swords and clubs, and one of Jesus' followers cut off the ear of one from the crowd, Jesus said, "Put your sword back in its place . . . for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matt 26:52). And during his trial, Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews" (John 18:36). And in Luke 6:29 we have that famous passage, "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also." So that gentle God Jesus Himself, has said contradictory things about fighting. And in the Old Testament, we know that in many places there are stories of war fought in the name of God. In our reading from Isaiah this morning, there is the statement that God called Cyrus the Mede to deliver the Jews from bondage by the Babylonians. So finding a single Biblical message about war and peace is a more complex matter than some would lead you to believe.

I think we are safe to say, though, that the God of love I know doesn't will war. This appears to be Swedenborg's position, when he writes, "It is not by divine providence that wars occur, for they entail murder, plunder, violence, cruelty, and other terrible evils which are diametrically opposed to Christian charity" (DP 251). Who would deny that murder, plunder, violence, and cruelty are, as Swedenborg puts it, "terrible evils". And war does mean all those things.

When we talk about war, we are not talking about God's will. But there is another aspect to God's governance in the world that does apply to war. There are things that God allows, but does not want. God allows people to exercise their free will to commit evil. If we were all robots, and had our behaviors programmed into our brains so that we had no free will, we would no longer be human. We would no longer be free to choose good or evil. We would no longer be able to love at all, because love can't be forced, compelled, or demanded. Love is freely given, without compulsion. If God had His way, everyone would be in heaven; everyone would love each other, and everyone would love their Creator back, as He loves us. But God can't force us to love Him. And in order to be human beings with free will, God allows us the alternative to reject even Himself, and to act against His loving will. This is what God allows, but doesn't want.

And once we accept the reality of human evil, once we accept that people can choose to be driven by selfish greed and hatred, we must also accept the inevitability of war. For the roots of all war are the lust for power, the greed of possessing another's wealth, and the fire of violent hatred. People sometimes blame religion for war, and claim that religion is the cause of war. But this is not the case. Wars are always fought for the lust for power, the selfish greed to possess someone else's wealth, and from the violent fire of hatred. And none of these causes has anything to do with true religion. It is true, that sometimes people use religion as propaganda for war. But make no mistake; their real reasons are what I have just listed. As I said at the beginning of this talk, the Bible is a complex and sometimes contradictory book. And as I have also briefly shown, one passage alone can be pulled out of that vast book to justify peace or war. But justifying either position by one passage alone does not do justice to the whole of the Biblical message.

So once we accept the reality of evil, we are in the realm of what God allows, but does not want. And there is where war is. It is clear that evil can arise in a nation, or in a nation's leaders, and impel a nation into armed aggression. And it is equally clear, that we can't allow one evil power to attack and overpower other innocent, peace loving peoples or nations. So going to war to check the ambitions of greed and the lust for power is in accordance with religious principals. Good must be defended against evil. So Swedenborg writes, The good man has prudence and zeal for defense and rarely for attacking. . . . Hence comes this conclusion that it is allowable for one to defend his country and his fellow citizens against invading enemies . . . but it is not allowable to make oneself an enemy without cause (DP 252).

So defending one nation against the hostility of another is allowable. And I would here call close attention to the wording of that statement. It is allowable. Allowable, but not willed. And I will call

close attention to the final statement in that passage, “it is not allowable to make oneself an enemy without cause.” We are not allowed to pick a fight.

And it needs to be said that war is always the last option. We must first try every other possible way to correct violent aggression. Diplomacy is the first resort. Economic sanctions. Dialogue in the United Nations. And above all, and I don't think the world goes far enough here, we need to understand other cultures that look different from us. Too often what should be dialogue for mutual understanding becomes argument about whose way is better, and ultimately the drive to impose one's way of life onto another nation who may see things very differently. Then we end up in war.

So in the great histories of this fallen world, great wars have been fought. And brave men and now women too, have given their lives in just causes. Today we remember their great sacrifices, and we celebrate their great courage. We remember with sadness, that they had to pay their lives to preserve peace in this fallen world. “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). And it is love that motivates armies to pay the ultimate sacrifice for their country. It is love for precious ideals, as well as for the friends in one's nation, that calls forth the ultimate sacrifice from brave individuals. We think of ideals like freedom. We think of ideals like human rights. We think of ideals like liberation. And above all, we think of duty. For as our nation protects us, and provides for our wellbeing like a parent, we owe our nation the duty of protecting it against unlawful attack. And today we remember our fallen brothers and sisters, who have paid with their lives to make the world a place where those ideals can flourish.

It would be nice for me to stand here as a minister, and point my finger at the evil nations in this world, and to call down God's vengeance on them. In fact, I suspect that some people might expect me to do this. Some may think that a responsible religious leader would give insight into the political movements of our time. But this world has become too complex for such a simple action. In fact, I would see it as an abuse of my office to do so. Unfortunately, some of the political leaders of powerful nations in this fallen world have no such compunction. We hear leaders talk of other cultures as an “axis of evil.” We hear other leaders across the ocean speaking of the west as “the great Satan”. How can two cultures come to understand the values each culture holds dear, if dialogue is so emotionally charged with accusation. We live in a global economy, and now more than ever, we need to make every possible effort to understand the very different faces of the nations that surround our own.

So I accept the inevitability of war. But I don't like it. And I know that God doesn't want it. I pray for peace. I pray for the warring nations of this world to understand each other. I pray for those faces that look strange and hostile to us—I pray for the capacity to see them as brothers and sisters. Blessed are the peace makers. I call for each individual to be an agent of peace. In the personal, local, and national level I call for each individual to work for understanding and for peace. We are responsible agents in a global economy. And we are the agents that will bring peace to this troubled world. We each can transform the world we have inherited. We can transform the immediate world we meet with day to day into a peaceful kingdom. And we can act globally to transform the world into a place of peace. I will close with a quotation from a marvelous book I've been reading called *Alchemy of Soul*. In it Lee Irwin powerfully writes, We are creating the conditions for world peace and collective well-being; we are the responsible agents of that creation and our individual lives are a testimony of the maturation of the world into a more harmonized and well-integrated global reality. The quality of our life—its generosity, kindness, loving concern, its soulful relationships—is the medium of world transformation (30).

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. Amen.

## PRAYER & INSPIRATION



by Rev. Judith  
Inspiration and Prayer for November 4, 2012:

This weeks focus is on Veterans Day.

Because of my military family background for many years, I was a hawk. In seminary I became a peace maker. Real Peace begins with me and is internal, so if I want to change the world and end war, I must end war within me. Do I hate something? Do I envy someone? Do I resent something or someone? Do I lust after money, property, or prestige? I must change my internal! Are you ready to begin?

Blessings on your journey.

"Beloved Lamb of God, be close to all the veterans of our world. Wrap them in your cloak of forgiveness and Love. Bind their wounds. Heal their hurts. Give each of your children the blessing of Divine Discernment. Help all of us to become peacemakers of this world by changing our internal selves. Bless our enemies and change us. Thank you for your steadfast Love and Forgiveness. Help us work together to change our world. AMEN. "

Love, blessings, hugs, and prayers

## **Giving Thanks for Insanity**

**November 18, 2012**

### **READINGS**

#### Scripture

- <sup>30</sup> *I will praise God's name in song  
and glorify him with thanksgiving.*
- <sup>31</sup> *This will please the LORD more than an ox,  
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.*
- <sup>32</sup> *The poor will see and be glad—  
you who seek God, may your hearts live!*
- <sup>33</sup> *The LORD hears the needy  
and does not despise his captive people*
- <sup>34</sup> *Let heaven and earth praise him,  
the seas and all that move in them,*

Psalm 69

#### FROM SWEDENBORG

Apocalypse Explained (Whitehead) n. 689

689. Verse 17. *Saying, we give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, signifies the acknowledgment that all being, living, and ability are from the Lord. This is evident from the signification of "saying and giving thanks," as being to acknowledge, since "to fall upon the face and to worship," and then "to give thanks," can have no other signification than to acknowledge, here the omnipotence of the Lord. Also from the signification of "the Lord God," as being the Lord in respect to Divine good and Divine truth; for where Divine good is meant in the Word the names "Lord" and "Jehovah" are used, and where Divine truth is meant the name "God" is used, therefore "the Lord God" and "Jehovah God" mean the Lord in respect to Divine good and Divine truth. Moreover, "Jehovah" in the Old Testament, is called "Lord" in the New. It is also evident from the signification of "Almighty," as being to be, to live, and to have ability of Himself, and also that the being, life, and ability of angels and men are from Him. (That this is meant by omnipotence, may be seen above, n. 43; also that Divine omnipotence means what is infinite, n. 286.)*





## GIVING THANKS FOR INSANITY



by Rev. Wilma

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 week is Thanksgiving. It is a time to give thanks for our own times of healing. The Divine is able to transform terrible life experiences into profound times of growth. Boisen life is a good example; a psychotic break became a spiritual experience that led to the creation of pastoral counseling. This week, let's look into our own lives for times when God has taken tragedy or illness and brought us to greater wholeness afterwards.

## PRAYER & INSPIRATION



by Rev. Judith  
Inspiration and Prayer for 11/18/12:

This week I have been thinking about how tragic incidents in our lives teach us to be more than we have ever been before. How has a tragic event affected your life, and how did you grow from it?

For me, profound changes have occurred in my life and the way I lived changed after a tragic incident.

How did you change?

" Holy God, who knows our trials and tribulations before we do, grant us the deep understanding and growth that comes from walking through the tragic times. Keep us close to you everyday and comfort us when we despair over our lives. Give us your strength to face these tragedies and grow through them with love and understanding of ourselves and others.

We are so grateful for your Divine Wisdom and Love you bring us Daily. Thank you, Lord thank you. AMEN."

With Love,  
Rev. Judith

## **Regeneration or Psychosis?**

**November 25, 2012**

### **READINGS**

#### Scripture

New International Version (NIV)  
Psalm 96

- 1 Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
2 Sing to the LORD, praise his name;  
proclaim his salvation day after day.  
3 Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
- 4 For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;  
he is to be feared above all gods.  
5 For all the gods of the nations are idols,  
but the LORD made the heavens.  
6 Splendor and majesty are before him;  
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.
- 7 Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
bring an offering and come into his courts.  
9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of his[a] holiness;  
tremble before him, all the earth.  
10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."  
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;  
he will judge the peoples with equity.
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;  
let the sea resound, and all that is in it.  
12 Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;  
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.  
13 Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes,  
he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

From Swedenborg:

Heaven & Hell, #89



Swedenborgian  
Community Online  
Love, Spirit, Life

First, I need to state what correspondence is. The whole natural world is responsive to the spiritual world—the natural world not just in general, but in detail. So whatever arises in the natural world out of the spiritual one is called “something that corresponds.” It needs to be realized that the natural world arises from and is sustained in being by the spiritual world, exactly the way an effect relates to its efficient cause.

By “the natural world,” I mean all that extended reality that is under our sun and that receives its light and warmth from it. All the things that are sustained in being from that source belong to that world. The spiritual world, in contrast, is heaven, and to that world belong all the things that are in the heavens.

## REGENERATION OR PSYCHOSIS?



by Rev. Wilma

Swedenborg wrote this in his dream journal:

*Something very wonderful happened to me. I came into strong shudderings as when Christ showed me the divine grace; one followed the other, ten or fifteen in number. ... The shudders are started from below in the body and went up to the head.*

Wilson Van Dusen, a Swedenborgian psychologist, wrote this about this and similar dreams of Swedenborg's: *The reader who knows of the Hindu kundalini may recognize what Swedenborg is dealing with. Kundalini is the spiritual that can be induced to rise just as Swedenborg describes it “started from below in my body and went up to the head.” There are Hindu spiritual exercises that induce this, and Swedenborg, with no knowledge of these practices, happens to be following them. [p. 127]*

There are numerous modern accounts of a similar type of the rising of energy through one's body. [Here is one:](#)

*Out of nowhere a megalithic wave of energy surged from the base of my spine up through the central core of my body and out through the crown of my head. A bolt of energetic 'lightning' sent my entire body into a huge convulsion (somewhat like you'd imagine if someone had died and been brought back to life with a paramedic defibrillator machine!). From lying in a relaxed position, my entire body tensed into the height of rigidity as I was thrown upwards and then immediately collapsing into a heap on the floor. I felt like every cell of my being was fiercely squeezed out.*

*Clearly once was not enough - this happened seven times in rapid succession. Each time I'd experience a bolt of lightning from the base through to and beyond the crown accompanied with an*

*involuntary convulsion, throughout my entire physical body. The last vestiges of the 'me' that I thought I was were being shattered, whilst my entire being was infused with universal life energy.*

Here is [another one](#), written by spiritual leader, Gopi Krishna:

From "Kundalini, the Evolutionary Energy in Man" by Gopi Krishna, 1967

*"Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord.....The illumination grew brighter and brighter, the roaring louder, I experienced a rocking sensation and then felt myself slipping out of my body, entirely enveloped in a halo of light. It is impossible to describe the experience accurately. I felt the point of consciousness that was myself growing wider, surrounded by waves of light. It grew wider and wider, spreading outward while the body, normally the immediate object of its perception, appeared to have receded into the distance until I became entirely unconscious of it. I was now all consciousness, without any outline, without any idea of a corporeal appendage, without any feeling or sensation coming from the senses, immersed in a sea of light simultaneously conscious and aware of every point, spread out, as it were, in all directions without any barrier or material obstruction. I was no longer myself, or to be more accurate, no longer as I knew myself to be, a small point of awareness confined in a body, but instead was a vast circle of consciousness in which the body was but a point, bathed in light and in a state of exaltation and happiness impossible to describe."*

Lee Sannelli, M.D., helped found the Kundalini Clinic in Oakland, CA. He studies the psychiatric implications of kundalini experiences. He writes:

*From a survey of the literature, the clinical study of our own cases and laboratory findings, we present the thesis that a process, most usefully viewed as the 'rise of the kundalini' is a reality, is much to be desired, and can be described as a evolutionary process taking place in the human nervous system.*

*Many years ago ... in a seminar on kundalini, C.G. Jung and his colleagues observed that the rising of this force had rarely, if ever, been seen in the West. They suggested that it would take a thousand years for the kundalini to be set in motion by depth analysis.*

*However remote Jung considered the possibility of an accidental or voluntary arousal of the kundalini in his day, he certainly had a clear grasp of its psychological significance. [p. 17]*

One case from his clinic he talks about is this:

A housewife began to practice transcendental meditation. She developed tingling and numbness in her legs. She got worried, and tried to stop it, and developed a stiff leg and foot drop. She consulted a neurologist who put her on cortisone and said she might never walk again. She became increasingly depressed.

A friend suggested Sannelli's clinic, and he writes that she was "clearly in the early stages of the physio-kundalini cycle. Her worry about the prognosis and the effect of the cortisone treatment had led to pain and stiffness in her back and legs." After he identified her symptoms, she was on the road to recovery and to accepting spiritual awakening in her life. [p. 78]

Sannelli tells many stories of people who began a spiritual awakening that was not understood in our culture. The person was diagnosed with medical or psychiatric problems, and treated for those symptoms without any support for the spiritual emergence taking place.

Many researchers are now trying to help treating professionals to consider possible spiritual awakenings in symptoms that they see.

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 ....*

*Sometimes, a person can have a combination of symptoms that require treatment for medical or psychiatric conditions -- and also need support for a spiritual emergence that may be taking place. Boisen is an example of someone who had a psychiatric condition that became the impetus for spiritual growth.*

Swedenborg wrote a lot of the process of "regeneration" -- or spiritual growth -- where there can be many stages and type of experiences. He might say today that some things considered "psychosis" or illness are actually ways in which one is experiencing regeneration. But, then, Swedenborg preferred "both/and" to "either/or." So he would probably say that many experiences could be BOTH part of spiritual awakening AND a psychiatric or medical condition.

It is important that we not be too quick to label something as "only" medical or psychiatric without considering possible spiritual components.

## PRAYER & INSPIRATION



by Rev. Judith

Inspiration and Prayer for 11/25/12:

Years ago, when I was first introduced to dream work. My teacher recommended that we create a dream journal and a dictionary of our dream interpretations.

We would list the objects, colors, events, people, activities and keep a catalogue of our reactions to these symbols.

Then later when I was in seminary I took a course on "Dreams and Dream Interpretation".

Our Professor was Rev. Dr. Jeremy Taylor, an internationally known author, dream worker and teacher. Jeremy taught us that our dreams have many layers of interpretation to them.

We each have a different dream interpretation when looking at the same dream. We are different in our experience, and the matrix through which we view the world. Because of that fact when we work together on a dream we can learn from each others interpretations. All sorts of stories, mythologies and psychological symbols can be used to interpret dreams. Through dreams we can grow mentally and

spiritually. Have you ever thought of looking at your dreams as a way to grow spiritually?

"Beloved Creator, as we work to grow spiritually, direct us in the path to take. Show us continually the way. Thank you for protecting us, guiding us, and giving us your wisdom and grace to expand into the person you want us to be. May we always serve you with devotion and a whole heart. Show us how to be more understanding and compassionate with others. Lets us live with gratitude and love in our hearts. May we be a blessing to others and a good and faithful servant to you. AMEN."

Love, Rev. Judith





## *The Candle of Hope*

*December 2, 2012*

### READINGS

#### Scripture

Romans 5 New International Version (NIV)

Peace and Hope<sup>5</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we<sup>[a]</sup> have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we<sup>[b]</sup> boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we<sup>[c]</sup> also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

From Swedenborg:

Arcana Coelestia (Elliott) n. 6097

6097. '[Few] and evil have been the days of the years of my life' means that the state of life of the natural has been full of temptations. This is clear from the meaning of 'the days' and 'the years' as states, as above in 6093, 6095; and from the meaning of 'Jacob's life' as spiritual life in the natural, also as above in 6093. Temptations in that state are meant by the statement that the days had been 'evil'. All temptations appear to be evil because they are inner feelings of anxiety and distress, and of seeming damnation. For at such times a person is thrown into a state involving his own evils, as a consequence of which he is in the midst of evil spirits who make accusations and thereby torment his conscience. But the angels still protect him, that is, the Lord does so through the angels. The Lord preserves in him a sense of hope and trust, which are fighting strengths from within that enable him to offer resistance. The natural is particularly subjected to temptations when it is to receive the spiritual, for in it reside evils of life and falsities of doctrine. That is the reason why Jacob says what he does about himself, for here he represents the natural in respect of truth.

### THE CANDLE OF HOPE

by Rev. Wilma



The man in the Santa suit caused quite a stir on the streets of New York as handed out \$100 bills to people most impacted by Hurricane Sandy. When a news reporter asked him why he was doing it, he said "The ravages of the storm are not as strong as the hope in people's spirit."

He knew that recovery from the hurricane was primarily about hope.

A policeman saw a man without shoes or socks, and the coldest night of the season. He walked into a store and purchased socks and boots for the man and then came out and put them on the man's feet.

Yesterday was International Aids Day. Here is a recent report:

*GENEVA, 20 November 2012—A new World AIDS Day report: Results, by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), shows that unprecedented acceleration in the AIDS response is producing results for people. The report shows that a more than 50% reduction in the rate of new HIV infections has been achieved across 25 low- and middle-income countries—more than half in Africa, the region most affected by HIV.*

*In some of the countries which have the highest HIV prevalence in the world, rates of new HIV infections have been cut dramatically since 2001; by 73% in Malawi, 71% in Botswana, 68% in Namibia, 58% in Zambia, 50% in Zimbabwe and 41% in South Africa and Swaziland.*

*In addition to welcome results in HIV prevention, sub-Saharan Africa has reduced AIDS-related deaths by one third in the last six years and increased the number of people on antiretroviral treatment by 59% in the last two years alone.*

*"The pace of progress is quickening—what used to take a decade is now being achieved in 24 months," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "We are scaling up faster and smarter than ever before. It is the proof that with political will and follow through we can reach our shared goals by 2015."*

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival" of something we have been waiting for. Most Western Christian Churches celebrate Advent as the beginning of the Church Year. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas day, and is the season of waiting for the birth of Jesus.

Many churches have an Advent wreath, and light one candle each of the four Sundays of Advent. The first candle is lit today, and is considered by most to be the candle of hope.

A single candle burning is a powerful statement of hope.

In today's reading Swedenborg talks about hope helping us through temptations:

*For at such times a person is thrown into a state involving his own evils, as a consequence of which he is in the midst of evil spirits who make accusations and thereby torment his conscience. But the angels still protect him, that is, the Lord does so through the angels. The Lord preserves in him a sense of hope and trust, which are fighting strengths from within that enable him to offer resistance.*

Hanukkah begins this week. It is also a story of hope.

The Jews had to defend their Temple from the Greeks. They needed to re-dedicate it, and they wanted to light the Menorah. There was only enough oil for one night. But, miraculously, the candle

kept burning for eight nights! This year Hanukkah is Dec. 20 - 28.

Swedenborg connects hope with prayer:

Arcana Coelestia (Potts) n. 2535

*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.*



Here is a prayer of hope from Rev. Judith:

*"Our Lord who has dominion over all in our world,  
Help us to let go of our concerns for our life, and Surrender the direction and care to you. Let us be listeners of your voice, and action takers of your plan for us. Having faith and trust in you and your wonderful care, we are able to have hope for our future and peace in our lives instead of fear and chaos around us. Thank you for your peace, comfort, love and plenty in our lives. We are grateful for all that we have and the gifts you have bestowed upon us. Give us the power to follow you and to will carry out your will for us. AMEN."*

*Love, Peace and Hope, Rev. Judith*

Where is hope in your life today? Where do you see hope in the world today? How can you bring hope into someone else's life?

## *The Angels of Peace*

*December 9, 2012*

### READINGS

#### Scripture

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called [b] the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

#### From Swedenborg:

Heaven and Hell, NCE

284: Anyone who has not experienced heaven's peace cannot know what the peace is that angels enjoy....In order to perceive it, we need to be the kind of person who as to thought can be raised and taken out of the body and brought into the spirit so as to be with angels. Since I have perceived heaven's peace in this way, I can describe it, but not in words as it really is, because human words are not adequate. ...

There are two things at the heart of heaven, innocence and peace. We say that they are at the heart because they come straight from the Lord.

286. First, we need to say where peace comes from. 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 true within each angel. Those are the sources of peace... in to its essence, it [peace] 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.’ ...

287. 2. ... Because peace means means the Lord and heaven and also heavenly joy and the delight of good, greetings in ancient times were – and consequently still are – ‘Peace be with you.’ ...

289 Since divine peace arises from the Lord’s union with heaven – and in particular with each individual angel by virtue of the union of the true and good – when angels are in a state of love they are in a state of peace, because this is when the good within them is united to what is of peace, because this is when the good within them is united to what is true...

## THE ANGELS OF PEACE

by Rev. Wilma



This is the second week of Advent, and as we light the 2nd candle, we focus on **peace**. On Swedenborg's trips to heaven, he chatted with the angels about peace. He said that on the earth, we consider ourselves at peace if we are not at war. Or, on a personal level, when we are successful in our earthly affairs and can take a rest. However, the angels pointed out that in heaven, peace is only possible with the Lord's inflow. Without that, peace doesn't exist. An evil person cannot be at peace, because one must have love and innocence to experience it.

Swedenborg describes the peace in heaven like this:

*This peace may be likened to morning or dawn in springtime, when, the night being passed, with the rising of the sun all things of the earth begin to live anew, the fragrance of growing vegetation is*

*spread abroad with the dew that descends from heaven, and the mild vernal temperature gives fertility to the ground and imparts pleasure to the minds of men, and this because morning or dawn in the time of spring corresponds to the state of peace of angels in heaven ( Swedenborg says that as long as we are in our bodies on the earth, we cannot comprehend peace. We have to be in the heavens to fully grasp it.*

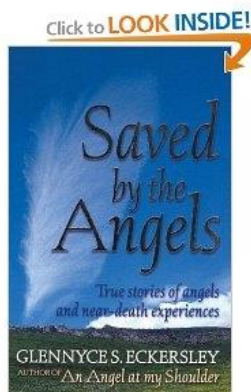
The angels live in this peace -- this combination of peace and innocence. Because of this, angels are often able to show us a bit of that peace to improve our lives on earth.



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. She is interviewed on radio and TV and travels about for various appearances. She spoke one time at our sister denomination, The General Church, in Byrn Athyn, PA.

I had a joyous opportunity to meet her in 2001 when I spent 6 weeks at the New Church Theological School in England. Glennyce helped me understand that Swedenborg never intended his views to become stuffy ideas in unread books on dusty shelves. He wrote about understanding the life around us; including the active participation of angels in everyday human life. She is proof that when you start asking people about angel stories in their lives, the overwhelming responses can fill many books.

One of Glennyce's books is about angels that are part of near death experiences. These angels are particularly attuned to bringing messages of peace. Here are a few of her true stories:



Marion and her boyfriend were walking home on a bitterly cold winter night. The road was treacherous, and they were eager to get home to fire and dinner.

*They passed the bleak-looking train station and approached the path they needed to take to reach the house. Without warning, Marion shouted loudly that they must stop, insisting that they could not continue down that particular road. 'Why ever not?' her boyfriend asked. Her answer was more startling than her yell. 'Can't you see the angel,' was the reply, 'warning us not to go that way?' Her boyfriend could see nothing and chided her for being fanciful. Marion insisted, however, that the angel was real and very large. Traditional in appearance, it had huge white wings stretching from above its head to the ground. Clothed in a long white gown, it was surrounded by a bright glow. It was clear to Marion that this was a warning and that the angel was there specifically to protect them. She had a sensation that the angel was male and heeded his warning by insisting that they did not move any further down their intended path. Almost instantly a loud noise filled the clear cold night, deafening in intensity. With incredulity they watched as a huge telegraph pole snapped in two, crashing to the ground immediately in front of them. The heavy pole and all the live wires hit the snow and ice, spectacularly bursting into flames. This was of course on the very spot where they would have then been had the angel not warned them. Marion's boyfriend was speechless. Marion has no doubt in her mind whatsoever about what she saw and indeed why she saw it.*

*Unquestionably, that night they had been saved by the angel.*

[Eckersley, Glenyce S. (2011-06-30). Saved By The Angels (Rider Book) (Kindle Locations 288-294). Random House UK. Kindle Edition].

David was a happily-married nurse with a young son. His child loved to swim, so and his wife often took the boy to the local pool. David himself couldn't swim, so was proud that his some could. He decided to jump into the pool himself one day, and was not prepared for how deep the water was.

*Opening his mouth in this awful panic, he felt the searing pain of water entering his lungs. He describes the pain as a sensation of molten lava being poured into him. ... He also at this point saw the figure of his son swimming happily lower down the pool. This is the last thing I shall ever see, he thought. It was then that he saw, underneath the figure of his son, a strange mist forming, coming through the water towards him. The pain in his lungs was by now excruciating, but from the mist there emerged a figure. As the figure grew closer he felt the pain subside and he recognised the form of his much loved grandmother. She was clothed in a long white gown with her hair streaming in the water behind her and David stared transfixed. He had loved her very much, but knew that she had been dead for many years. The pain had by now completely gone and David was aware of arms slipping underneath him and a gentle lifting movement. ...*

*David lost consciousness and the next thing he can remember is lying on the side of the pool with attendants working on him to remove the water from his lungs. He had survived against the odds, having been underwater and in trouble for some considerable time. His memory of the event is extremely lucid and he has no doubt whatsoever that his guardian angel saved him that day and amazingly it was his grandmother.*

[Eckersley, Glenyce S. (2011-06-30). Saved By The Angels (Rider Book) (Kindle Locations 244-252). Random House UK. Kindle Edition.]

Rachel was a 21 year old woman with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. One day she had stabbing pains in her chest, and had trouble breathing. She passed out.

*She recalls the appearance of a dark tunnel opening before her and a bluish-white light glowing at the far end. Realising with amazement that she was actually inside this tunnel, gazing towards the light, she was astonished to see a figure emerging. Instinctively Rachel knew it was her grandfather; he had been much loved, and she had missed him greatly when he died. He slowly walked from the*

*light, looking as he had always done when alive. He was even wearing a familiar suit. It all appeared so normal and comfortable, and she was delighted to see him once more. Standing a little way in front of Rachel, he told her that it was not in fact her time to go to heaven. Many people, he told her, would have need of her help, so she had to remain strong and never give up. This was obviously a reference to the illness she would have to face, but also an encouragement for her life's direction. He reached out his hand towards Rachel and she realised that this must be a gesture of farewell – she would soon have to leave this extraordinary place. Holding out her hand she felt her grandfather touch her finger with his own. A wonderful blue-white light radiated from him and engulfed Rachel, filling her with the most amazing sensations of peace and love. Moments later she was once more conscious of lying in her bed, but the pain and fear had subsided and she found she could breathe easily once more. Today Rachel is much stronger and is cheerfully facing the future. She is seeking work where she can help others, offering care and support. Valuable work indeed and she knows the strength and drive to carry on came from that wonderful encounter with her grandfather and her contact with the next world. She says that she will never forget the day she and her much loved grandfather were reunited, if only for a brief moment.*

[Eckersley, Glennyce S. (2011-06-30). Saved By The Angels (Rider Book) (Kindle Locations 1812-1816). Random House UK. Kindle Edition.]

Swedenborg tells us that we always have angels with us, providing us support and guidance. However, as Glennyce points out in her book, we don't all have dramatic encounters with our angels. She writes:

*Often people express the desire to have angels in their lives, asking how they might achieve it. The fact remains that we all have angels in our lives; it is just that they appear in forms not generally associated with angelic intervention. I have tried to illustrate in this book the fact that messages will arrive in the most unlikely of guises: unexpected, wonderful fragrances, bright lights, music, inanimate objects appearing at significant times, and the wonderful signs from nature. All are messages, and we receive what we can cope with. Not everyone needs a 'full blown' angel; we may simply require a sign.*

[Eckersley, Glennyce S. (2011-06-30). Saved By The Angels (Rider Book) (Kindle Locations 2417-2422). Random House UK. Kindle Edition.]

Here is a challenge for this coming week. Become a detective about the angels in your life. What are the clues of their presence? Notice your dreams, your intuitions, coincidences. Be aware of how they are helping you find peace in this stressful Advent season.



Here is a prayer of peace from Rev. Judith. It is based on Col. 3:15 *[Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful]*



Her prayer is a poem, that she wrote herself.

The Hush of early morning,  
dew on the grass & plants,  
light all around,  
silence touches the soul.  
Gratitude for all that is our world,  
both good and bad.  
Each,  
a lesson unto itself,  
to hone the soul  
God's heart felt wish for us.  
The primordial sound of Silence,  
perfect Peace,  
gift of the coming of Light,  
birth of the Lord.  
Be it,  
breathe it,  
see it,  
savor it,  
deep inside,  
Gratitude,  
Perfect Peace.  
Love, Rev. Judith



## ***Where Is the Joy?***

***December 16, 2012***

### **READINGS**

#### Scripture

##### The Escape to Egypt

13 ...an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." Mt. 2:13

##### From Swedenborg:

The reason angels and spirits are so intimately united to us that it seems to them as though our characteristics were their own is that there is such an intimate union within us of the spiritual and the natural worlds that they are virtually one. However, because we have separated ourselves from heaven, the Lord has provided that there should be angels and spirits with each of us and that we should be governed by the Lord through them. This is the reason there is such an intimate union. It would have been different if we had not separated ourselves, because then we could have been governed by the Lord through a general inflow from heaven without having spirits and angels assigned to us. Heaven & Hell, 247 NCE

## **Where Is the Joy?**

by Rev. Wilma



The phone rang on Saturday morning, and I picked it up to hear the voice of Jimmy, an eight-year-old boy who is a client in my social work practice. "Something really strange happened this morning," he said, "and Mom said I should call you."

"I'm glad you called, Jimmy. What happened?"

"Well, I got up this morning, like usual, and my Dad said, "Good Morning" to me. Then I started to cry. I cried and cried. But I didn't know what I felt sad about. I NEVER cry."

I had a pretty good idea about why he cried.

"Did you have a scary dream; or watch something on TV that made you sad?"

He was quiet for a moment, then said softly, "I was watching TV last night before I went to bed, and I heard about all those kids killed in their school. I think that's why I was sad."

We went on to talk about how scared he was to go back to school, and how powerless he felt. Then he had another concern. "They said that the shooter had autism. I have autism. Could I do this kind of thing?"

"Oh course not! Lots of people have autism but they aren't any more violent than anyone else. Most of them are are very kind, like you are." He was relieved then, and went on with his day.

Jimmy's story isn't unique; his distress is similar to what both kids and adults are feeling all over North America – all over the world -- about the horrible tragedy in Newtown, CT. on Dec. 15th.

It's another example of Swedenborg's holographic world: whatever happens to one of us happens to all of us. All of our hearts have been broken. Whatever one of us does to heal brings healing to all.

A minister interviewed on TV today said, "*This is the week we're supposed to be feeling joy.*" This is the third week of Advent, and we light the candle of "joy." How do we find joy in the season when 20 innocent children have been murdered?

Our theme this month is on angels. Where are angels in the lives and deaths of children?

Swedenborg tells us that angels are with children from the time of their birth. Sometimes angels perform amazing miracles that save the lives of children.

To find stories about angels helping infants, we can start with today's scripture reading about angels telling Joseph to take the baby Jesus to Egypt.

Glennyce Eckersley is an angel researcher in England. Here is a story that she was told about another infant being saved by angels.

Lesley, a young British woman, married a Nigerian man and moved to Africa. Her husband was gone a lot, and Lesley had no family near by. So she felt very alone when she went to the hospital to have a baby. Labor was long and complicated, and an IV had to be inserted into her arm. She lost consciousness. One of the doctors on her team was exhausted after working 48 straight hours. She went to a room, locked it, and fell asleep. Then she was shaken awake and

told to go room 6, where the woman and her baby were in danger. As the doctor woke up, she realized that no one was in the room, and the door was still locked from the inside. She figured it was a dream, and went back to sleep. Again, she was shaken awake with the same message. She woke up fully, and saw a young woman, dressed in white. She raced to room 6, and found that Lesley had been given the wrong IV. She and the baby were moments from death. But she switched the IV in time, and a lovely baby girl was born. Lesley is now an artist, certain that an angel saved her life and her baby's. So this is also a story about what inspired a young woman to become an artist!

Jean was a 15 year old who loved to ride her bike. One day, through no fault of her own, she was a victim of a terrible accident: a bus slammed into the side of her bike on the road. Jean felt herself being lifted a fraction of a second before the impact; She was carried about 20 feet, and gently put on the ground. Her bike was a crumpled mass of metal. She was certain it was a guardian angel that had saved her.

Some of the parents of children who survived the tragedy on Dec. 15th felt that angels were instrumental in saving the lives of their children. One boy described feeling a sudden impulse to run past the shooter and out the classroom door – and to safely.

For those children who were killed, angels greeted them in heaven. Swedenborg wrote this in *Heaven & Hell*:

*330. When children die they are still children in the other life, having a like infantile mind, a like innocence in ignorance, and a like tenderness in all things. They are merely in the rudiments of a capacity to become angels, for children are not angels but become angels. For everyone passing out of this world enters the other in the same state of life, a little child in the state of a little child, a boy in the state of a boy, a youth, a man, an old man, in the state of a youth, a man, or an old man; but subsequently each one's state is changed.*

*Children are adopted by angels:*

*332. As soon as little children are resuscitated, which takes place immediately after death, they are taken into heaven and confided to angel women who in the life of the body tenderly loved little children and at the same time loved God. Because these during their life in the world loved all children with a kind of motherly tenderness, they receive them as their own; while the children, from an implanted instinct, love them as their own mothers. There are as many children in each one's care as she desires from a spiritual parental affection. This heaven appears in front before the forehead, directly in the line or radius in which the angels look to the Lord. It is so situated because all little children are under the immediate auspices of the Lord; and the heaven of innocence, which is the third heaven, flows into them.*

Children are educated by angels, and grow into adulthood in heaven.

*335. Children are taught chiefly by representatives suited to their capacity. These are beautiful and full of wisdom from*

*within, beyond all belief. In this way an intelligence that derives its soul from good is gradually instilled into them.*

Knowing that children are nurtured by angels in heaven does not, of course, take away our grief about loss and tragedy. It is not helpful to a grieving parent to say to them, "Don't be sad; your child is with the angels." It is true that the child is safe and happy, but still such a profound loss must be grieved.

Knowing that children are happy in heaven does not take away our obligation to look at the role guns play in our society. Fareed Zakaria of CNN notes that in looking at the tragedy in Aurora, Colorado, we tend to look at the psychology of the gunman. However, he points out that our mental illness is not higher than in other countries. Yet, most other countries have far fewer deaths by firearms. He says on his [website](#):

*The United States stands out from the rest of the world not because it has more nutcases – I think we can assume that those people are sprinkled throughout every society equally – but because it has more guns.*

We have 5 percent of the world's population and 50 percent of the guns. He says *Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion, but not to his or her own facts. Saying that this is all a matter of psychology is a recipe for doing nothing. ... The problem isn't people with mental illness; the problem lies within our society and its attitudes and laws towards firearms.*

It's important that we not blame people with mental illness for the violence in our society. The Asperger's Association of New England posted this on its [website](#):

*Early reports have suggested that the suspect, Adam Lanza, might have been diagnosed with Asperger syndrome or a mental health condition. This has not yet been confirmed. Having Asperger syndrome does not preclude acts of violence, just as having any other condition, or no condition, does not preclude acts of violence. Some people with autism spectrum disorders have co-existing mental health conditions or other complex issues. Nevertheless, violence is not part of the Asperger or autism profile. People with Asperger syndrome or any other form of autism are far more likely to be the victims than the perpetrators of violence. Although it is impossible to conceive of a mass shooting as a mentally healthy act, the vast majority of mental health issues are not associated with violence.*

What can we do in this time of Christmas joy? We can remember WHY we have joy during the Christmas season. Jesus was born into the world as a Light to guide us through the darkness. The Light is reborn in all of our hearts this season. No matter how dark the darkness becomes, it can never shut out the light. The deeper the darkness, the brighter the light shines.

Someone from Newtown, CT, was interviewed -- I think the mayor. He was asked if the Christmas lights in town should be shut off in honor of the killings. He said, "Oh, no! We must let them shine as brightly as we can to show that nothing can destroy the spirit of Christmas!"

Trust the Light in your heart, and in all the places we see it in the world. Be joyful for the light in our midst in this time of darkness.



"Lord, the one who holds us in your heart, Help us to Pray without ceasing for the souls departed and those in mourning. Give comfort to all, the families of the dead and the family of the killer. Our hearts are heavy with this loss, and we cannot understand what drove someone to slaughter so many children and adults. Help us to pray and have compassion for this young man. Keep us close to you as we go through this week. Comfort those who lost loved ones. Help us to experience the Joy that the Lord's birth brought even in our sorrow. We are grateful for your Grace, Comfort, Compassion, and Love, God. Give us your "Peace that passeth all understanding". Amen."

With Love,  
Rev. Judith



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## *The Hopes and Fears of All the Years*

*December 23, 2012*

### READINGS

Scripture Luke 2

The Shepherds and the Angels

8And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

9An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ[a] the Lord. 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

15When 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:

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 ... True Christianity, #89

## The Hopes and Fears of All the Years

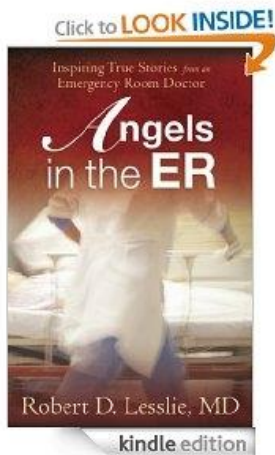
by Rev. Wilma



It was about 9:30 in the morning, and Dr. Lesslie was beginning his day in the E.R. There was an emergency message from an ambulance racing to the hospital. A woman, driving quickly to the hospital to deliver her baby, had been in a terrible accident, and might not live.

The E.R. raced into action, having everything in place moments before the bleeding woman was wheeled in. Quickly, it was clear that the woman was dying and could not be saved. The baby had to be delivered. The Ob-gyn in the hospital rushed down to do a C-Section, and a squalling baby boy was born. The mother died.

Her husband and their 4 year old daughter showed up moments later, and Dr. Lesslie had to go to the waiting room to give them the bad and the good news. This story is from Robert Lesslie's latest book, *Angels in the E.R.*



Dr. Lesslie called this chapter, "Out of Death Comes Life."

That sounds like the last week of news reports, doesn't it? There has been a horrible tragedy in Newtown, CT., leaving 28 people dead [20 students; 6 teachers; the shooter, and the shooter's mother]. Yet we are preparing to celebrate the birth of the Christ child – the birth of light into the world.

How do we mourn death and celebrate birth? Death is part of life, isn't it? Death and birth. There is no better expression of this than in the words to *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.



*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,  
 And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!  
 How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv'n;  
 So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav'n.  
 No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,  
 Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.  
 O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
 Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.  
 We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
 O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!*



"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 shephards watching over their flocks. He look 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 composes simple music for the children. Redner couldn't seem to put a tune together. But, on Dec. 23rd, he suddenly work 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.



Phillips Brooks was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1835. In 1859 he graduated from Harvard and the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia. He then began a long and distinguished career serving as pastor in Philadelphia at the Church of the Holy Trinity Church and then in Boston at the Trinity Church. He was appointed Bishop of all of the Episcopal churches in Massachusetts shortly before his untimely death in his late fifties.

One of Brooks favorite pastimes was sitting on the floor of his study playing with children. After his death, a five year old girl asked where he was. When told by her mother that Bishop Brooks had gone to heaven, the child exclaimed, "Oh, Mama, how happy the angels will be."

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 Hitz put into her hands a Braille version of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* that she learned that heaven was for everyone.

Brooks was a reader of Swedenborg, and wrote  
*I have the profoundest honour for the character and work of Emanuel Swedenborg. I have from time to time gained much from his writings.*

It is these words that we can hold in our hearts this week:

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

The streets may be dark with the murders of children and the fears of all of our years may be present. But there is an everlasting light that is bringing eternal hope.



Inspiration & Prayer for 12/23/12:

To dear Ones that read this blog, I wish you the most wonderful Holiday Season, full of family, joy and laughter, but most of all I wish you Love.

Your inspiration is to look at the Miracle of the Lord's Birth, and how he has lightened up your life.

Be love and inspiration to others this season.

*Holy God, Thank you for the birth of your son in our lives. his love and light will sustain us through all of our lives even in times where we do not know if we will be able to feed and shelter our families. Lord, bless each of your children this year with peace, plenty, love, gratitude, and compassion for others. Help us to reach out to those who have so little to live on, those who's future looks bleak, the homeless on the street, those who mourn, the ones with health problems. Help us to bring your light to them. Clear our channels of anything that keeps us from service to you. Thank you for the love and guidance you have given us each day. AMEN.*

Love Rev Judith

*Christmas Eve Service*

*December 24, 2012*

**READINGS**

***Isaiah 9:2-7***

2The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. 3You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. 4For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 6For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Psalm 96

1O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

2Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

3Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

4For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

5For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

6Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

7Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

8Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

9Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

10Say among the nations, "The Lord is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

11Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

12let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

13before the Lord; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

Luke 2:1-2

2In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own towns to be registered. 4Joseph 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. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And 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.

8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" 15When 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." 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## Christmas Eve

by Rev. Wilma

Here is what Swedenborg says about the birth of Jesus:

Heaven and Hell (Dole) n. 286

*a. In the highest sense, peace means the Lord, because he is the source of peace; and in the inner sense it means heaven, because people there are in a state of peace: 3780, 4681. Peace in the heavens is the divine nature profoundly touching everything good and true there with a blessedness that is beyond our comprehension: 92, 3780, 5662, 8455, 8665.*

*The coming of the Lord is not according to the letter, that he would again appear in the world, but it is his presence in each one, which takes place as often as the gospel is reached, and its holiness is thought about. AD 3900:9*

*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*



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*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 ... True Christianity, #89*

This has been a difficult year for many people -- financial problems, violent shootings, tragic accidents. This is why we need to be reminded of the Light. This Light can penetrate the deepest darkness. The Light is always stronger than the dark. Our days have been shorter and shorter. However, we have passed Dec. 21st, when there is a bit more light every day ... until there will be more light than darkness! This is a way we can understand and appreciate the Lord's message about Light.

Swedenborg talks about God as the like the sun; with its rays shining down on every one and every thing. He talks of God as "inflow" of light and love into each one of us every moment of every day.

How can you open your heart more fully to accept this light tonight? What is God birthing in your heart tonight, that will shine forth within your life?

Take some time to ponder these questions, as you enjoy this Christmas concert from the Mormon Tabernacle Choir:

Let's remember how this Light is with all tonight; no matter had sad or desperate their situation. Let the Lord's Light be birthed in your heart tonight!

*"Dear God, we are waiting breathless for the celebration of your sons birth. We celebrate the coming of light and love which he brought. Give us the heart of Joy for tomorrow and our year ahead. Help us to let go of parties and presents so we may focus on the Miracle of tomorrow and the meaning of Christ's Birth. Amen. " Love, Rev Judith*



*The Bells on Christmas Day*

*December 25, 2012*

**READINGS**

**Isaiah 9:2-7**

7How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

8Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. 9Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. 10The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Psalm 98

1O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.

2The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

3He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

4Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

5Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.

6With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

7Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

8Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy

9at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

John 1:1-18

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 14And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

## Christmas Morning

The Bells on Christmas Day

by Rev. Wilma

For Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the famous poet who lived from 1807 to 1882, Christmas had become a season of grief. He never got over the tragic death of his wife Fanny in July of 1861. It was a terrible accident, on a lovely day. She was cutting locks of her daughter's hair and wanted to preserve them in an envelope. She melted sealing wax with a candle, and a breeze came through the window, causing her dress to catch fire. She ran to the next room, to her husband, who threw his arms around her to try and extinguish the flames. He himself was badly burned, and she died the next day. He was already deeply-saddened by the Civil War that had begun just a few months before her death.

The first Christmas after Fanny's death, Longfellow wrote, "How inexpressibly sad are all holidays." A year after the incident he wrote, "I can make no record of these days. Better leave they wrapped in silence. Perhaps someday God will give me peace." In the Christmas of 1862 he wrote, "'A merry Christmas' say the children, but that is no more for me."

Just before Christmas 1863, Longfellow heard that his oldest son Charles, a lieutenant in the Union army, had been severely wounded with a bullet that had almost paralyzed him. The Christmas of 1863 was silent in his journal .

But then, on December 25, 1864, he heard the bells and felt hope again stirring in his heart. Perhaps he was encouraged by the re-election of Lincoln, and saw hope for the end of the war.

On that Christmas morn, he was able to write: "Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: 'God is not dead, nor doth he sleep! The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men!' Again, hope had defeated despair.





I felt a kinship with Longfellow and his family while I attended seminary at the Episcopal Divinity School, just down the street from Longfellow's home in Cambridge. I passed by it often, and wondered what their life had been like there. Now I know that it was filled with deep tragedy; but, still he was able to hear the hope of the bells on Christmas Day, and write one of our most beloved Christmas carols.

#### I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along the unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Till ringing, singing on its way  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head  
'There is no peace on earth,' I said,  
'For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail  
With peace on earth, good will to men.'

*Oh Happy Day! When Jesus was born into our world. He is the Light of our lives, the blessing of Truth, and focus of Divine Love and Wisdom for us. Thank you God. May we Regenerate our lives in honor of His Glorious incarnation. Keep us close, Lord, for we need you with us each day to live in Joy, and harmonious actions. Happy Birthday!! AMEN. "*

Many days of Joy, Blessings and Miracles both big and small. Rev Judith