

THE REVEREND JACOB DUCHÉ AND THE ADVENT OF THE NEW CHURCH IN ENGLAND*

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In 1693 King Charles XI of Sweden received a letter from Fort Christina, the first of three settlements established from 1638 on the western bank of the Delaware. New Sweden came under Dutch control in 1655, but life went on for the Swedes pretty much as before.¹ Charles XI enjoined the assistance of the Rev. Jesper Svedberg of the Swedish consistory, father of Emanuel Swedenborg and Professor of Theology, and later Bishop of Skara, who sent the ministers Jonas Auren, Andrew Rudman, and Eric Bjork. Until his death in 1735 Bishop Svedberg remained “the special guardian of the Swedish church on the Delaware.”² This fascinating if elliptical connexion with Swedenborg shows the smallness of the Early Modern world and reminds one of the reflexive influence of mundane

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¹ Conrad J. I. Bergendoff, “The Swedish Church on the Delaware,” *Church History* 7: 3 (Sept. 1938): 216-17.

² *Ibid.*, 222, 226.

affairs like colonization and wars in the diffusion of Swedenborg's teachings between Europe and America. In 1664 the area passed to English control, forming part of the grant to William Penn who established Pennsylvania, with its capital Philadelphia lying where Fort Christina had once existed. By 1775 King Gustavus III had greatly reduced expenses and gradually the settlement ceased to exist, absorbed in the great melting pot of the new Republic.³

Thus before the English hegemony of the eighteenth century, the Delaware region was a seedbed for Swedish and Dutch influence. The tolerant Quaker colony encouraged various Tunkers (or Dunkers), Moravians, Mennonites, and other Pietist and Separatist sects from Germany and elsewhere to settle there. Earlier, in 1683, the Dutch Labadists had followed an austere communal discipline at Bohemia Manor in Maryland, and a decade later the followers of Zimmerman, founder of the mysterious Chapter of Perfection, arrived in Pennsylvania. Seeking the "Woman in the Wilderness" from *Revelations*, they prepared for the imminent Millennium that would arrive the following year.⁴ This small group quickly disappeared, but thirty years later, when Conrad Beissel came in search of the Chapter, he founded Ephrata instead, the longest-lasting German Pietist commune, which endured well into the nineteenth century. The Declaration of Independence and the early currency of the Republic were printed on the Ephrata presses. The westward-expanding nation continued to draw migrants seeking religious freedom and Rappites, Zoar, and the Ebenezers came later, as well as French and German Swedenborgians who dispersed throughout the frontier in places like Ohio and rural Iowa.⁵

The principal route for the introduction of the Writings to America was through the polyglot merchant James Glen, an original member of the recently formed Theosophical Society. Glen lectured in Boston and Phila-

³ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁴ See John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire, The making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁵ John E. Jacoby, *Two Mystic Communities in America* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1931), 14; see also E. O. Randall, *History of the Zoar Society, from its commencement to its conclusion, a sociological study in Communism* (Columbus: A. H. Smythe, 1899); and John S. Duss, *The Harmonists, A Personal History* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972).

delphia in 1784 en route to inspect business interests in South America. Miss Hetty Barclay, a boarder in the house at Philadelphia, used the books Glen had left there and with Francis Bailey formed a Swedenborg study group, believed to be the first society of the kind in the U.S.⁶ The diffusion of the Writings proceeded slowly; Francis Bailey, a draper, placed pages in the rolls of cloth he sent to the West, as later John Chapman in his fruitful journeys would spread a "twofold gospel," planting apple seedlings and the Heavenly Doctrine throughout the frontier districts. Bailey also funded the first American translation of Swedenborg's works, and among the subscribers were Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris and Thomas Jefferson.⁷ Yet there was arguably an earlier diffusion of the Writings, most likely through Receivers connected with the Swedish Mission, and later European migrants. The Swedish settlers from the 17th Century had, like all migrants, brought ideas from their Old World culture, and though the evidence is sketchy, this is almost certainly where the Rev. Jacob Duché, as we shall see a pivotal figure in the diffusion of Swedenborg's theology and moral philosophy, first encountered the Writings. While it is not certain when the busy cleric made the switch from William Law and adopted Swedenborg, the likelihood is that it was within the perfervid atmosphere of the American colonies in the years preceding the Revolution. A leading promoter of cooperation between the churches, he worked closely with Carl Magnus Wrangel, provost of the Swedish mission on the Delaware, and one may speculate that this is where Duché might have first been introduced to Swedenborg's doctrines.⁸

The diffusion of the Writings to the (then) far West came mainly via French and German immigrants. In 1826 Frenchman Guillaume Oegger, formerly a vicar at Notre Dame in Paris and confessor to the Queen, gave up all connexion with the Catholic Church and accepted Swedenborg. It was Oegger whose *Rapports Inattendues entre le Monde Materiel et le Monde*

⁶ Robert Hindmarsh, *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church in England, America, and other Parts* (London: Hodson & Co. 1861), 29.

⁷ Charles Arthur Hawley, "Swedenborgianism and the Frontier," *Church History* 6: 3 (Sept., 1937): 210.

⁸ Clarke Garrett, "The Spiritual Odyssey of Jacob Duche," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119:2 (April 1975): 144. I am grateful to Rev. Stephen Cole for this reference.

Spirituel (1832) first brought Swedenborgianism in France into active alliance with Animal Magnetism and spiritualism. He wrote the controversial *Le Vrai Messie* (The Real Messiah) and emigrated to New Orleans, Louisiana.⁹ The Mississippi and steam power were the vehicles of the westward surge, and within that surge came European Receivers. In 1844 German migrants fleeing the oppression of the Lutheran state church carried Tafel's translation of Swedenborg's works to St. Louis, a staging post throughout the history of the West and important enough to support a German Swedenborgian paper, *Der Bote*. Moving north, they brushed against the remnants of the earliest communal experiment within the New Church at Yellow Springs, Ohio, founded in 1824 by Cincinnati Swedenborgians after they were inspired by a visit from Robert Owen.¹⁰ Another German group led by Hermann Diekhoner moved to rural Iowa in 1850 to form the Jasper colony, taking its name from "Jaspis" in Rev. 21:19: "Der erste Grund war ein Jaspis," They interpreted Swedenborg's teaching as communism and stoutly opposed Negro slavery. As at Yellow Springs and the later experiments at Leraysville, Pa. and Canton, Ill., the communistic principle was soon abandoned, and the land was divided among the settlers.¹¹

In 1855, when the Fourierist wave in America was waning, French followers, the Icarians, were settling in nearby Corning, Iowa, and the German Ebenezers came to Iowa and settled "Amana" beside the Jasper colony on twenty thousand acres.¹² Although both were German, these neighbouring colonies differed greatly, as the separatist Ebenezers claimed to have been guided for some two hundred years by a spiritual being whom they called "the Lord," who had inspired their emigration first to land near Buffalo, New York, then to the distant Iowa territory. The numbers of the Jasper colony declined slowly; in 1880 they dedicated the

⁹ Hawley, 213.

¹⁰ Bergendoff, 225; on the Yellow Springs community, see John Humphrey Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1870), 59–61; Marguerite Beck Block, *The New Church in the New World* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1984), 118–19.

¹¹ Hawley, 217; the description is of the first foundation of the New Jerusalem, with one wall made of jasper.

¹² Hawley, 220.

first Swedenborgian church in Iowa. The colony endured into the early twentieth century, while the Amana commune prospered in Iowa and was only disbanded in the 1930s.¹³

In these and similar frontier experiments like those of the Shakers and the Jemimakins, the impetus was to organize a communitarian way of life and to appeal to an authority beyond the Scriptural, whether of a spiritual being or through a charismatic leader who invoked spiritual authority, and frequently this was mixed with the expectation of an imminent Millennium. This continuing trend provides a cultural context, a pattern for understanding the enduring appeal in America of transmundane authority, that is, a core belief in the efficacy of spirit communion, fed by a strong individualism in religious matters. With the rise of Spiritualism in the 1850s, this trend would extend beyond specific groupings to embrace popular culture.¹⁴

In Pennsylvania the heady amalgam of "Dunker," pietistic, and millennial currents reached sophisticated Philadelphia; important too were the Dutch revivals in New Jersey in the 1720s, the "log cabin" evangelists and the early Presbyterian awakenings in Virginia, culminating in the Great Awakening and the waves of revivals that rumbled throughout the thirteen colonies.¹⁵ While the diffusion of the Writings within this cultural maelstrom was widespread, inevitably much of the evidence has not survived historical memory. Its early effects, however, can be inferred not only in the inexact tracing of waves of emigration of Receivers from the last quarter of the eighteenth century; a more compelling connection to the origins of the New Church can be ascertained from the character, interests, and activities of the Rev. Jacob Duché and his milieu, within the heated political and religious atmosphere of 1770s America.

The Anglican minister the Rev. Jacob Duché imbibed these and other influences. Born into a prominent Huguenot family, the son of a merchant and former mayor of Philadelphia, he received a patrician upbringing and

¹³ See Bertha M. Shambaugh, *Amana That Was and Amana That Is* (microfilm) (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1932); Hawley, 220-21.

¹⁴ See Geoffrey K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

¹⁵ William Warren Sweet, *Revivalism in America: Its Origin, Growth, and Decline* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1965 (c. 1944), 28.

was educated in the Philadelphia College before studying theology at Clare College, Cambridge. Ordained there as an Anglican clergyman, Duché returned to the colony where he was appointed assistant rector in Christ Church and St. Peter's at Philadelphia.

Jacob Duché was a popular preacher; his elocution was judged "uncommonly graceful, and his sermons oratorical." Benjamin Franklin commented on his "singular eloquence in the Pulpit." In 1763 he endorsed the preaching of George Whitefield and even allowed the use of Christ Church.¹⁶ Attracted from an early age to "mystical divinity," especially to William Law's translations of Jacob Boehme's mystical tracts, the young Duché wrote a poem on the Dunkers and, after a visit to the Ephrata cloister in 1771, he praised their music, which though having "little or no air or melody" but consisting of "simple, long notes, combined in the richest harmony," yet thrilled one to the very soul. He recalled that "I almost began to think myself in the world of spirits, and the objects before me were ethereal"; the impression made upon him was so marked that it "continued strong for many days."¹⁷

In 1774 Duché was brought suddenly into prominence. At a contentious moment of debate concerning the varied religious convictions of the delegates to the Continental Congress, he was unexpectedly promoted as a man of "piety and virtue" by Samuel Adams of Boston. Jacob Duché dutifully came the next day and read the 35th Psalm, along with a moving impromptu prayer, and eventually he was made Chaplain to the Continental Congress.¹⁸ He was among the first clergymen to strike out prayers for the King from the liturgy. However, the British occupation of Philadelphia in 1777 was having dire effects, and Duché resigned the chaplaincy and wrote a letter to George Washington, protesting that "Independency was the Idol they had long wish'd to set up, and that rather than sacrifice this, they would deluge their Country with blood." He urged that the resistance be discontinued, and unwisely requested Washington "to represent to Congress, the indispensable necessity of rescinding the hasty and

¹⁶ Garrett, 144.

¹⁷ Quoted in E. G. Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture*, (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 115 (online).

¹⁸ Garrett, 147; on Duché's sudden prominence, see also Jon Meacham, *American Gospel* (New York, Random House, 2006).

ill-advised declaration of Independency."¹⁹ It was a serious error that now made him *persona non grata* with the Revolutionary elite, and Duché made a hasty egress to England where through the patronage of the Bishop of London, he was eventually appointed chaplain at the Female Orphan Asylum in Lambeth.

Duché's fourteen years in London were fruitful; the Swedenborgian study group held in his apartment on Sunday evenings did much to inspire like-minded persons to inaugurate the first Swedenborgian society, although as an Anglican clergyman he did not himself join.²⁰ Nevertheless, by 1785 Jacob Duché had a deep and abiding commitment to Swedenborg's teachings. He declared in a letter to his mother-in-law that "The New Church from above, the Jerusalem of the Revelation, is come down upon earth," and advised her to "Look henceforward for an *Internal Millennium*."²¹ And a 1790 tract makes an unmistakable commitment to Swedenborg's teachings on Correspondences and Influx, contrasting the ordinary Naturalist with:

the Divine Naturalist, whose inward eye is opened and illuminated by the Light of another world, [who] can see, and contemplate, and adore that Universal Principle of Life, which is perpetually manifesting Himself to every object of universal nature, according to its capacity or aptitude to receive His enlivening beams . . .²²

It was principally through Duché's discussion group that English Swedenborgians were inspired to form the Theosophical Society, a precursor to the establishment in England of the first New Church chapel, an event that had its gestation in America, albeit indirectly.²³ In this circuitous

¹⁹ Rev. Jacob Duché, letter to George Washington, Philadelphia, 8 October, 1777, *Discourses on Various Subjects* (London: T. Cadell, 1790).

²⁰ Hindmarsh, 40.

²¹ Jacob Duché to M. Hopkinson, 5 May 1785, quoted in Clarke Garrett, "Swedenborg and the Mystical Enlightenment in Late Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, (January 1984): 72-3.

²² Duché, 349.

²³ The first society was the Manchester Printing Society, founded the year before by Rev. Clowes; Block, *The New Church in the New World*, p. 63; the Theosophical Society is not to be confused with Mme H. P. Blavatsky's venture a century later.

way, Duché was pivotal to the fortunes of the early New Church, especially in England. The deep interest of this Episcopalian minister in Swedenborg's theology and moral philosophy parallels that of his contemporary the Rev. John Clowes at Manchester, an Anglican prelate who had also been drawn first to William Law's translations of Jacob Boëhme. While remaining a minister within that communion, Clowes worked tirelessly for the advancement of Swedenborg's teachings, even refusing a Bishopric from William Pitt so that he could devote himself to propagating the Writings.²⁴ Swedenborg had not intended to found a new denomination, and Duché, like Clowes, saw no contradiction in keeping within the Anglican communion while promoting Swedenborg's doctrines.

The question remains: how did Duché come to attract the burgeoning group of enthusiasts for Swedenborg to his Sunday evening discussions? It is likely that the family became interested in Swedenborg through the numerous artists and artisans who were among the first converts to the Heavenly Doctrine, a subculture that was fascinated with mysticism and occultism. Clarke Garrett suggests that the initial contact with this subculture may not have been with Duché himself, but with his very talented but tragically ill son Thomas, who would succumb to tuberculosis within two years. Thomas Spence Duché was a student of Benjamin West, an American by birth but now court painter to George III, and he may well have met Swedenborgians at West's studio or at some other gathering place of this lively subculture that flourished in eighteenth century London, and included printers like Robert Hindmarsh, engravers such as William Sharp, sculptors like John Flaxman, and a multitude of painters, musicians and others who, as children of the Enlightenment, had grown alienated from the Established Church but still craved the life of vital religion.²⁵

After falling foul of the Revolutionary elite and exiling himself to London, Duché's discussion group dramatically increased the popularity of Swedenborg among these urbane Englishmen. Gathered together were a variety of individuals, illuminist Masons, pietists, political radicals, spiritists, alchemists, and Kabbalists among them. Some of them, like Robert Hindmarsh and his father James Hindmarsh, a former Methodist

²⁴ Block, 65.

²⁵ Garrett, 151-2.

minister who in 1788 would be chosen by lots to be ordained the first New Church minister, Frenchman Dr. Benedict Chastanier, an original member of the Avignon Society but soon to renounce that association, and the peripatetic merchant James Glen, became the core of the Theosophical Society founded in 1783, and later of the New Church inaugurated five years later. William Sharp, perennial radical and member of Thomas Hardy's London Corresponding Society, probably on occasions brought his friend, the fellow engraver and radical, William Blake; Sharp would later champion the ravings of Richard Brothers and then become a follower of Joanna Southcott. Also participating were Gen. Rainsford, inveterate joiner of many millennial, Masonic, and other societies and later Governor of Gibraltar, along with a number of musicians and artists, among them the sculptor John Flaxman and the painters Philip de Loutherbourg and Richard Cosway, who created a famous portrait of George IV. Robert Hindmarsh recalled those Sunday evenings with Duché at the Female Asylum when upwards of thirty persons, male and female, had spent the evening "in a truly delightful manner, receiving from his lips the most impressive lessons of instruction . . ." ²⁶ Five years later they formed the first New Church chapel in Great Eastcheap, London; its first General Conference held on 14–17 April 1789 was attended by seventy-seven persons, among them William Blake and his wife Catherine, who signed as sympathizers the forty-two propositions for separation from the Established Church. Meanwhile, at Manchester working class interest in Swedenborg was being sparked by the efforts of the Rev. John Clowes.²⁷

Duché's group was also an important nexus for what some historians have called a "Millenarian International" in its appeal to quasi-masonic conclaves like the Avignon Society and the Stockholm Exegetic and Philanthropic Society, both having roots in Illuminist Freemasonry.²⁸ A paral-

²⁶ Hindmarsh, 21, 40 ; Clarke Garrett, *Respectable Folly, Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 158-9; J. F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming, Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 75.

²⁷ Robert Rix, "William Blake and the Radical Swedenborgians," *Esoterica* 5(online): 95; see also Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood, Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

²⁸ Garrett, *Respectable Folly*, 109; on the Avignon Society, Joanny Bricaud, *Les Illuminés D'Avignon, Étude sur Dom Pernety et son Groupe* (Paris: Librairie Critique Émile Nourry, 1927).

lel development had been taking place within Freemasonry since its reorganization in 1717 when Desaguliers formed the Grand Lodge of London. As the orthodox Craft shook off its “occult” associations, other lodges like the “strict observance” Templars were formed by Baron Charles Hund, Chevalier Michael Ramsay, and others.²⁹ It was these new esoteric and semi-secret lodges that served as a “short circuit,” a conduit for heterodoxies of all kinds through their fraternal bonds and frequent correspondence, so that with a considerable traffic flowing between them, the cross-pollination of ideas created further momentum toward an “occult revival.”

The three major trends of this revival known as the “covert” Enlightenment in the closing decades of the eighteenth century were the recovery of ancient knowledge such as Animal Magnetism, the millenarian imperative, and the alleged contact with a Higher Reality. To each of these trends, the teachings of Swedenborg and Mesmer contributed significantly. Within European high culture the concepts of both these Enlightenment thinkers were frequently perceived as being interrelated, assuming vast significance in the broader atmosphere of *fin de siècle* cultural debate, perhaps at the very inception of that famed struggle between science and religion that endured over the next century. I have argued elsewhere that a profound synthesis was effected during the “covert” Enlightenment, based upon such specific understandings of connexions between the insights of Mesmer and Swedenborg, just as in the next century Brook Farmers and other “Associationists” would discern connexions between Fourier and Swedenborg.³⁰

The Avignon Society in France was the most radical in this lush undergrowth of the Enlightenment, connected at various times with eighteenth Century illuminist Masons such as J. C. de Saint Martin, the Marquis de Thomé, Count Grabianka, and not least, Cagliostro. All of them were honorary members of the Exegetic and Philanthropic Society founded

²⁹ M. K. Schuchard, “Swedenborg, Jacobitism and Freemasonry,” in Erland J. Brock et al (eds), *Swedenborg and His Influence* (Bryn Athyn: The Academy of the New Church, 1988), 365; Richard William Weisberger, *Speculative freemasonry and the enlightenment: a study of the craft in London, Paris, Prague, and Vienna* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1993), 71.

³⁰ See Alfred J. Gabay, *The ‘Covert’ Enlightenment: Eighteenth Century Counterculture and Its Aftermath* (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 2005), passim; Charles Arthur Hawley, “Swedenborgianism and the Frontier,” *Church History* 6: 3 (Sept., 1937): 217.

by the Abbé Pernety, an illuminist high-ranking Mason; in 1782 he translated Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* into French, for which he obtained biographical details of Swedenborg from Augustus Nordenskjöld. Conceived firstly as a centre of alchemy and hermetic philosophy under Pernety, Avignon took a distinctly chiliastic direction with the arrival of the Polish Count Tadeusz Grabianka who promoted an imminent Millennium, and by 1790 they had become what one New Church commentator scornfully referred to as "mystico-cabbalistico-magnetical practitioners."³¹

In London, one group of mystical international Masons in particular was important to the fortunes of the Swedenborgians, becoming in effect the centre of a range of activities connected with Freemasonry, the Theosophical Society, Duché's group, and even with the Stockholm faction. The London Universal Society was formed in 1776, partly on the initiative of high-ranking Masons, Dr. Husband Messiter, who had been Swedenborg's personal physician, and Dr. Benedict Chastanier, now residing in London. In 1768 Chastanier discovered Swedenborg, being among the first Frenchmen to adopt his teachings, and moving to London he carried also the Masonic system of Theosophic Illuminati (*Illuminés theosophes*) developed at Avignon, which he introduced to England. However by the early 1780s disagreement with Pernety's interpretation of Swedenborg and unease at a new premillennial flavour introduced by Count Grabianka led him to renounce the Society, after which, like his former Avignon colleague William Bousie, he became more thoroughly involved in the New Church. The April 1790 *New Jerusalem Magazine* regarded the Avignon Society as "the *antipodes* of the New Church, erected on the very borders of Babylon."³²

The Universal Society, now working for Universal Regeneration, had a permeating influence on the reception of Swedenborg in London throughout the 1780s. Among the manuscripts left to the Swedish Academy on Swedenborg's death in 1772 were various draft manuscripts. The Finnish Freemason Augustus Nordenskjöld had some of these texts copied, and in 1783 his brother Carl Nordenskjöld brought these copies along with some of Swedenborg's original manuscripts to London and entrusted them to

³¹ Robert Rix, "Healing the Spirit: William Blake and Magnetic Religion," *Romanticism on the Net* 25 (Feb. 2002) (online): 5.

³² Garrett, *Respectable Folly*, 110.

Benedict Chastanier.³³ Carl Nordenskjöld stayed three years in England before returning to Sweden to help establish the Exegetic and Philanthropic Society (apart from the exegesis of Swedenborg's works, the concept of "philanthropic" work was then common within Masonry). In 1788, perhaps alarmed at the unsettled state of the Stockholm Society, Carl Wadström brought more manuscripts to London, including the *Spiritual Diary*. Wadström was baptized that year into the New Church, and with Augustus Nordenskjöld he penned a treatise outlining plans for a free community to be established on the West coast of Africa, inspired by Swedenborg, who was among the first to develop the concept of a "noble savage."³⁴ The Sierra Leone colony was endorsed by the King, but never came into existence. Wadström continued his work against the evil of slavery, cooperating with Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp in the African Institute, and having a significant input in providing William Wilberforce with material to present to Parliament that ultimately led in 1807 to an end to the slave trade within the British Empire, although that was achieved by the Foxite Whigs.³⁵ Chastanier also published the *Journal Novi-Jerusalemite*, a broadsheet in which he called on all Masons to accept Swedenborg's teaching. As noted, he was important in establishing connexions between English Swedenborgianism and mystical Catholic Freemasonry as practiced at Avignon; this rapport ceased after 1782, as a result of the new chiliasm, exacerbated on the other side by conflicts over *Conjugal Love*, which Avignon regarded as a "damnable book," but which many among the international Masons gathered in London tenaciously promoted.³⁶

In the mid-1780s, Chastanier briefly served as chief assistant to the leading English magnetizer, J. B. de Mainauduc. As a medical man Chastanier insisted strongly that Swedenborg was the real discoverer of Animal Magnetism, and calling it "Religious Magnetism," he argued for its importance. Chastanier argued that the regenerate spirit is shown to be

³³ Rix, "William Blake and the Radical Swedenborgians," 109.

³⁴ Hawley, 'Swedenborgianism and the Frontier', p. 208.

³⁵ Christopher Hobhouse, *Charles James Fox*, London, James Murray (1964), p. 204.

³⁶ Block, 59.

powerful in the evolution of good, because it is in the Divine, and the communication of health was for him simply that of “a sound mind giving of itself through a sound body” the result of which must be “a restoration of order in the voluntary recipient” of magnetism.³⁷ Thus in Chastanier, and also others connected via Masonic and similar ties, we observe the principal currents of the “covert” Enlightenment: Swedenborgianism, Magnetism, and Illuminist Freemasonry, and as with the Stockholm group, Swedenborg and Mesmer were bracketed together in the minds of numerous English aspirants.

Over the 1780s decade, the Theosophical Society and Duché’s gatherings together became a conduit for the Masons’ heady blend of mystical ideas and radical politics. Universal Society members were regular guests at Duché’s Sunday evening discussions, and some also attended meetings of the Theosophical Society, with whom they cooperated in publishing Swedenborg’s works, even sharing the same printing press. Their presence facilitated the visits of many international high-ranking Masons. Count Grabianka, using the pseudonym Suddowski, spent the whole of 1786 in London to recruit like-minded persons in preparation for the imminent Millennium, when he was a “frequent and welcome” visitor to Duché’s Sunday evening discussions, and Hindmarsh printed his *“Letter from a Society in France, to the Society for Promoting the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem in London”* (1787).³⁸ Another visitor was Count Cagliostro, and the Swedenborgian Mason and philosopher Claude de Saint-Martin who had intimate connexions throughout the whole of the European esoteric and Masonic community. He was spiritual advisor to the Strasbourg Magnetists, and with J. B. Willermoz had been an original member of the mystical Order of the Elect Cohens, after the Hebrew word for priest. While in London, Saint-Martin visited the Theosophical Society, and in 1787 he was elected an honorary member of the Exegetic and Philan-

³⁷ R. McCully, “Benedict Chastanier: an early New Church Worthy,” *New Church Magazine* (London) IX (1890): 533.

³⁸ Garrett, *Respectable Folly*, 101-2, 109.

³⁹ McIntosh, Christopher, *Eliphas Levi and the French Occult Revival* (London: Rider & Co., 1975), 125.

thropic Society.³⁹ Thus as Robert Rix has observed, it was “a specific Masonic version of Swedenborg that dominated London Swedenborgianism throughout the 1780s.”⁴⁰ Jacob Duché, who had imbibed the strains of mystical Divinity and had discovered Swedenborg’s Writings in America, returned to the city where the great Teacher had published and lived out his last years, where he inspired Receivers to form the first New Church society. □

⁴⁰ Rix, “William Blake and the Radical Swedenborgians,” 104.