

SWEDENBORG INFORMATION GROUP

Last spring Mr. Per-Axel Atterbom and his wife May organized a new body, Swedenborgsgruppen (the Swedenborg Information Group), with headquarters at Kungsbacka, near Gothenburg, in Sweden.

Mr. Atterbom is a direct descendant of Professor P. D. A. Atterbom, who was a famous author and literary critic in Sweden in the beginning of the 19th Century. Professor Atterbom's long and favorable essay on Swedenborg in his *Swedish Seers and Poets* (1841) contributed much to make Swedenborg known in Sweden at that time.

Our Mr. Atterbom came across Swedenborg's works some ten years ago, but they did not make a great impression then. A renewed acquaintance last year was much more fruitful. When Mr. and Mrs. Atterbom found out how little was actually known about Swedenborg and his works in the Scandinavian countries they decided to do something about it. The result so far is the organization and beginning activity of the Information Group. In addition, the Atterboms made an extended tour to meet with New Church persons and organizations in England and the United States, with the purpose of learning more about New Church people, organizations, publishing and literature, etc., and seeking support for the new venture in Sweden.

In order to show something of the organization and objectives of this new group we quote parts of received communications.

"We will work as a neutral lay organization, similar to the Swedenborg Society and Swedenborg Foundation (in a much smaller way of course), independent of all Church groups, but in close cooperation with all."

"The group will arrange lectures, discussions, distribute informative literature, and in all possible ways spread information about the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which we think have a special meaning in our ('New Age') time."

One of the main concerns will be the translation and publishing of informative pamphlets and books which will effectively speak to today's public. In addition a mailing list is being compiled and a mail-order bookshop organized.

So far two lectures have been held, with the Rev. Brian Kingslake of Bath, England and the Rev. Ragnar Boyesen of Stockholm as speakers. Each lecture was attended by 55-60 persons.

The Atterboms "invite correspondence from Swedenborg groups and individuals in all parts of the world. New Church members and other 'Swedenborgians' visiting Sweden are cordially invited to contact" them for guided tours to Swedenborg sites in the western part of Sweden.

The address of the Atterboms and the group is Box 206, S-43401 Kungsbacka, Sweden.

PURPOSES OF THE ASSOCIATION

Discussions arising out of a series of informal meetings held in Bryn Athyn in June, 1976, arranged by Messrs. Kurt Simons and Harald Sandström, and attended by individuals interested in applying the teachings of Swedenborg to a broad spectrum of the physical and the social sciences, have made it apparent that a review of the purposes of the Swedenborg Scientific Association may be in order.

The early history of this association's efforts to accomplish its first charter purpose, "The preservation, translation, publication and distribution of the Scientific and Philosophical works of Emanuel Swedenborg," is well documented in a "History of the Swedenborg Scientific Association" by Charles E. Doering, Ph.D., published in the July, 1932, issue of *THE NEW PHILOSOPHY*. Suffice it to say here that the manuscripts have been preserved, with a few notable exceptions they have been translated into English, and they have been published. The recent publication of photo-offset reprints of a number of titles (see elsewhere in this issue) marks the continuing effort to keep English language editions of the scientific and philosophical works available for distribution. Still needed are editions of the works on *Iron* and *Copper* and, most especially, a new and complete translation of the work on the *Brain*.

The second charter purpose is "The promotion of the principles taught in [the scientific and philosophical] works, having in view likewise their relation to the science and philosophy of the present day." The primary means by which this purpose has been carried out is by the publication, in *THE NEW PHILOSOPHY*, of studies, investigations and discussions of Swedenborg's science and philosophy.

It is interesting to recall that *THE NEW PHILOSOPHY* had its beginning in 1898 as an independent journal, edited and published by Rev. John Whitehead. It was devoted to the exposition of

the philosophy presented in the scientific, philosophical and theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg. Although the language of the second purpose of the SSA appears to differ from the editorial objectives originally proposed for THE NEW PHILOSOPHY, there is no evidence of any intent to narrow the scope of the journal when it was acquired by the association in 1900.

The Swedenborg Scientific Association is vitally concerned with the philosophy of the theological Writings as well as that of the scientific and philosophical works. To quote from Dr. Hugo Odhner's "Principles of the New Philosophy"

In the Writings we . . . find not only a new Divine revelation of spiritual truths for the New Church, but also the evidence of a final development of Swedenborg's own understanding of philosophical principles.

In the Writings, many of these principles are given a Divine *imprimatur* as a vehicle of revealed doctrine. . . .

In the Divine providence, Swedenborg was led to perceive certain *universals* which took an ever clearer form as he progressed in his studies. They came to constitute a philosophy which was finally tested and matured in the light of heaven, Such perennial principles and premises are as essential to us as they were to him, and may be called "doctrines" of rational philosophy. We find these, clearly stated or clearly implied, in the Writings. But in order to see them more distinctly, we should also see them in their formative stages, as they take shape successively in Swedenborg's earlier works when the need for them first dawned upon him. [THE NEW PHILOSOPHY, April 1967, pp. 40-41]

Almost ten years have passed since Dr. Odhner rewrote this article, which first appeared in THE NEW PHILOSOPHY in July, 1941. It is an important summary, which should be read and reread from time to time by all who are interested in applying Swedenborg's philosophy to any modern discipline; indeed it includes a call for just such applications:

All the principles of the new philosophy are eminently practical, although abstruse in form. They call for a rewriting of the literature of all the social sciences. The doctrines of Use, of Influx, of the Grand Man, and of Discrete Degrees revolutionize civics and morals. The doctrine of Correspondences floods the fields of Esthetics and Belles Lettres with a new light, and introduces new challenges in interpreting the thought of antiquity. The new psychology of the Writings reveals the hidden contents of the depths of the human mind in their orderly strata and functions. The Epistemology of the New Church man necessitates a new understanding and evaluation of what the natural sciences may proffer. And a spiritual Teleology, together with all the other principles, creates a new concept of education. [Ibid. p. 72-3]

While for more than seventy-five years **THE NEW PHILOSOPHY** has been the principal means for carrying out the second purpose of the Swedenborg Scientific Association, the time is coming when lengthy and detailed studies must be produced, which will of necessity be of interest to only a few, and which will not lend themselves to publication in the limited space available in **THE NEW PHILOSOPHY**. New means, such as the publication of monographs, will have to be developed if the association is to go forward. It has also been suggested that the association could serve as a clearing-house through which independent New Church scholars could be put in touch with others having similar or related interests. To this end, communications directed to any of the association's officers would be welcomed.

E. B. A.

COMMUNICATIONS

Editor of **THE NEW PHILOSOPHY**:

I would like to reply to the careful and thoughtful analysis by Erik Sandström, Sr. (**THE NEW PHILOSOPHY**, Jan. 1976, pp. 380 f.) of my earlier article on meditation in your journal. The essence of his position is to support meditation on content (e.g., to reflect on the nature of God) but to call into question passive potency (watching, but not identifying with internal processes). My article took apart the single process of meditation into these two aspects because, in practice, an initial emphasis on content can seriously damage the benefits of the whole process. I indicated that these can later be seen as aspects of a single process. Mr. Sandström says the Writings do not clearly support passive potency. I agree. Almost always when they speak of meditation or reflection they refer to reflecting on content. The support for passive potency is there, but it is as subtle and pervasive as Swedenborg's obvious experience of the Divine.

I fear Mr. Sandström and I stand on opposite sides of the fence. I was speaking *from the experience* of meditation to the understanding of doctrine. Mr. Sandström is speaking *from doctrine* to the possibility of experience. For instance, he argues that "More serious, however, is the risk that the kind of meditation that seeks to perceive influx, instead of helping to undo proprium may unwittingly open up a flux from the proprium itself." Proprium basically means what is of one's own. By spending a few minutes a day noting, but not identifying with, whatever mental content occurs, one at least briefly quits seizing all mental contents as though they are of one's own making. But that is merely the reasoned part of the argument. The experience itself undoes proprium. The only real way to see it is to try it. From a long experience in meditation, I have to say it is obvious to me that all mental experience is given by influx,