A SWEDENBORGIANA OPEN HOUSE

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Once a year in October the Academy of the New Church celebrates its Charter Day. This commemorates the granting in 1877 by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of the charter under which the Academy operates. From time to time during the period of this celebration, which usually lasts two days, there is included an "Open House." Ex-students and other visitors are invited to a special display of the facilities of some part of the Academy. In the past this Open House has been arranged to display one of the schools, a new building, or the laboratories. This school year, on October 20, 1966, the staff of Swedenborgiana Research, Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner, Miss Beryl G. Briscoe, Mr. Lennart O. Alfelt, and the Academy librarian, Miss Lois E. Stebbing, acted as hosts.

The Open House began with a brief orientation meeting in the Benade Hall Auditorium where Dr. Odhner, addressing some 120 guests, gave a short review of the background to Swedenborgiana Research in the Academy. He then introduced Miss Stebbing, who talked about the beginnings and development of the several collections in the Swedenborgiana Library. Dr. Odhner thereafter continued the orientation by emphasizing the importance to the Academy of the activities connected with Swedenborgiana Research. In conclusion he presented a brief outline of the exhibits arranged in the Swedenborgiana Library and invited the guests to walk over to Pitcairn Hall to view the displays for themselves.

Pitcairn Hall, the latest addition to the campus of the Academy schools, is the new administration building of the Academy and the General Church of the New Jerusalem. It was inaugurated in April of 1966. Besides space for administrative uses the building also provides new quarters for the Swedenborgiana Library and the office of Swedenborgiana Research.

It was indeed a great step forward in the preservation of the valuable collections of Swedenborgiana when in the spring of 1966 these collections were moved to Pitcairn Hall from the quite unsuitable quarters in the main library building. The new accommodations, with their glass-enclosed cases and controlled climate,

are eminently suitable to house these collections of original works. The spacious rooms with their appropriate furnishings and quiet seclusion have an atmosphere conducive to research and development of the many actual and potential uses of the collections to the Academy and the New Church at large.

The Open House and exhibits at the Swedenborgiana Library offered an opportunity to acquaint friends and supporters of the Academy with the new quarters, and more particularly to display samples of the treasures this library contains and to show some examples of the work that has been and is being done in the field of Swedenborgiana.

In this short description we will view the exhibits according to the traditional division of Swedenborg's life, viz., the period of preparation and the theological period, to which are added some aspects of the activities of later generations. The nineteen exhibits were for the most part arranged around specific themes or objects, testifying in various ways to the richness and versatility of Swedenborg's mind and to the thoroughness of the preparation for his mission.

"The Road of Preparation" was the theme of the first exhibit. It gave an overall view of the extent and scope of Swedenborg's studies and reflection in the sciences and humanities as seen in his own works from the period of preparation. Fourteen original works by Swedenborg were displayed beginning with the *Selected Sentences* (1709) and ending with the *Worship and Love of God,* an unfinished work, partially published in 1745. The exhibited works represent more than a dozen fields of human learning and activities ranging from poetry, classical studies and philosophy, psychology and anatomy, to mathematics, the physical sciences and technology.

In several of these disciplines Swedenborg made exhaustive studies and arrived at conclusions, some of which only recently have been appreciated at their full value. As an example of the scope and quality of his source material in anatomy and physiology, one display was centered around the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* and more particularly its no. 17, which reads as follows:

> In the experimental knowledge of anatomy our way has been pointed out by men of the greatest and most cultivated talents; such as Eustachius, Malpighi, Ruysch, Leeuwenhoek, Harvey, Morgagni, Vieussens, Lancisi, Winslow, Ridley, Boerhaave, Wepfer, Heister, Steno, Valsalva, Duverney,

Nuck, Bartholin, Bidloo, and Verheyen; whose discoveries, far from consisting of fallacious, vague, and empty speculations, will forever continue to be of practical use to posterity.

All authors mentioned here were represented in this display by copies from the Swedenborgiana Library collections of the same original works once used by Swedenborg. The list of authors shows that Swedenborg consulted the best authorities of his time. Bidloo was represented, for example, by his *Anatomia Humani Corporis,* printed in 1685. This work contains 105 anatomical plates of a quality and beauty which cannot but arouse our great admiration for the skill of the anatomists, artists, and printers of those days.

Two of the exhibits featured Swedenborg's *Principia* and the companion volumes, *Iron* and *Copper,* all three volumes published in 1734. The first exhibit displayed the works in general together with some excerpts of contemporary reviews. The second showed some of the original drawings of Swedenborg's particles in the manuscript of the *Lesser Principia* and in the published *Principia,* together with various interpretations of the form of these particles shown in actual models made by Dr. C. R. Pendleton. The works on *Iron* and *Copper* attracted the attention and admiration of Swedenborg's contemporaries both on account of the learned content and on account of the beautiful printing, on which apparently no expense had been spared. These works, which were favorably reviewed, were used as textbooks and authorities for several decades after their publication.

Another exhibit showed Swedenborg as a technical writer and inventor, with an original copy of the world's first technological journal in the vernacular, *Daedalus Hyperboreus,* and a model, made by Mr. Gustav Genzlinger, of Swedenborg's hoisting machine.

Two interesting engravings in books from the 18th century were also displayed. One depicted the interior of a library in Vienna contemporary with Swedenborg. The arrangement of books and equipment was probably very similar in the many libraries he visited during his foreign journeys. The other engraving was a picture giving the content of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* in symbolic figures and forms. The same content could be seen described in the long and exhaustive title of the work, comprising more than one hundred words. Both these ways of describing the content excellently illustrated the recent discussion in the "Philosophical

Notes" in this journal on symbols and their character and relation to each other.

The preparatory period with its intensive studies and prolific writing shows a progressive development towards one goal: the publication of the theological Writings. In 1749 appeared the first volume of the Writings seen through the press by Swedenborg himself. It was vol. I of the *Arcana Coelestia.* Since then the work has been published in a second Latin edition in the 1830's, and presently a third edition is being brought out by the Swedenborg Society in London. All these three Latin editions were exhibited in one display, together with a phototype copy of the first draft of the *Arcana.* The numerous footnotes in the new third Latin edition show the careful scholarship that is going into that edition. This was emphasized still more by a displayed Xerox copy of a page from the second edition used in the preparation of the third edition. On this single page there are about fifty notations and remarks resulting from the reviser's comparison of the first edition with the draft and the second edition. It is interesting to note in the phototype copy of the first draft how Swedenborg occasionally rewrote a phrase or sentence several times before he found the wording that exactly represented the idea he wished to express.

While the previous exhibit displayed the work *Arcana Coelestia* itself and the meticulous care that is taken in consulting all available sources in producing a scholarly third edition in Latin, the next exhibit showed some of the reactions in the literary world to the first publication of the *Arcana.* Several contemporary notices and reviews were displayed as they once appeared in the original journals at the end of the 18th century, showing either the joy of the discovery of this work or the utter rejection of it.

Though the receivers of the Writings may still be few they are nevertheless spread among many nations and languages. This was shown vividly in an exhibit of the *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* in translation into twenty-five different languages. The exhibit included the original Latin edition, a transliteration into Braille, and a phonograph record, making a total of twenty-eight forms in which the message of this work can be brought to countless people, penetrating language barriers and physical as well as spiritual darkness.

It is natural that in an exhibit of this kind the Academy's most

valuable possession would be displayed, viz., Swedenborg's own copy of the *True Christian Religion* with a list of gifts received in the spiritual world, written in Swedenborg's own hand. Also in the same display were Swedenborg's own copy of the first English translation of *Arcana Coelestia,* vol. II, and one of Swedenborg's earliest autographs.

If a visitor to the exhibit perchance was not previously aware of the intensely active life Swedenborg led, the displays of some of the many books he wrote and the realization of how many fields of learning Swedenborg entered into would certainly bring about such an awareness. But perhaps Swedenborg's active life was brought into focus most vividly by a large map prepared especially for this Charter Day exhibit. Into the map were drawn the general routes of Swedenborg's eleven journeys abroad, supplemented with a more detailed itinerary of his travels. They stretched from Stockholm in the north to Rome in the south, and included most of the important seats of learning of his day. Incorporated on the map also were the titles of all the works published by Swedenborg himself. The placement of titles on the map close to the place of publication showed clearly that Swedenborg had his works printed in nine different places throughout northern Europe and that his favorite place of publication was Amsterdam. A human element know to us all was added to the statistical and graphical information on the map by the indication of Swedenborg's age at each of his journeys. From this it can be seen that Swedenborg made eight of his eleven journeys after he was 48 years of age, the last at the age of 82. Since the last seven of his journeys were for the publication of the Writings, the figures also give a measure of the intensive activity Swedenborg must have maintained even at an advanced age. They indicate also that he must have enjoyed good health up to his last illness in order to be able to endure the often considerable discomfort and strain of long journeys in his days.

Another human element is involved in the question, "What did Swedenborg look like?" This was the theme of one of the exhibits displaying copies of the many, sometimes very different, pictures of Swedenborg.

The works Swedenborg wrote as the Servant of the Lord, as well as his earlier preparatory studies, have inspired later generations to activities of various kinds. So, for instance, from the

early days of the New Church to our own time, New Church men have tried to express their conception of passages in the Writings through works of art. That the Memorable Relations especially have caught the imagination of artists was shown in one exhibit displaying two engravings published in 1790 in the *New Jerusalem Magazine,* depicting scenes from the Memorable Relations in *Conjugial Love* nos. 293 and 294, and a sculpture executed in polyester with motif taken from the same numbers. The sculpture, representing one of the seven virgins about to place a wreath of roses on the head of a small boy, was made by Robert L. Brown of Bryn Athyn. It is beautifully modelled, with the figures radiating an anticipatory joy, the intensity of which is heightened by a sphere of innocence yet at the same time tempered by the solemnity of the act.

Another area of activity, the preservation and spreading of the content of the original manuscripts by making accurate copies, was earlier one of the main concerns among individuals and organizations working in the field of Swedenborgiana. The work of preservation can now be regarded as completed, as the Swedenborgiana Library possesses copies of all the original manuscripts in the form of photolithographs, phototypes, or photostats. Several samples of such copies were on display. The new program along the same lines, which is presently implemented, is to put all the valuable works in the Swedenborgiana Library on microfilm. Some results from this work and the equipment used were also exhibited in three displays.

Finally, one of the exhibits displayed different aspects of the work in connection with the Swedenborgiana Document Collection. Notable were several examples of the untiring and thorough scholarship of Dr. Alfred Acton and the careful and skillful work done by Miss Beryl G. Briscoe in the revision and editing of notes and manuscripts left by Dr. Acton. Also shown were parts of two important reference works originally prepared by Dr. Acton and others but recently revised and re-typed by Miss Briscoe. A description by Miss Briscoe of this particular display appears elsewhere in this issue of the NEW PHILOSOPHY.

The Swedenborgiana Open House was made more enjoyable by the serving of refreshments by a committee headed by Miss Margit Boyesen, Dean of Women of the Academy College.