

Notes and Comments

A ROYAL VISIT TO BRYN ATHYN*

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Bishop King has given me the privilege of bringing to you, and simultaneously to the Bryn Athyn Society, official notice of a coming memorable event.

Let me start by reading to you (in English translation) a letter from the private secretary of the Swedish Royalty, addressed to Mr. Oscar Mattson in Gothenburg:

On behalf of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of June 17th.

His Royal Highness has read with interest what you have so kindly told about Bryn Athyn. His Royal Highness would have been happy to visit the school and the cathedral there, but regrets that the time was too short to permit such a visit.

Respectfully,
(sgd.) Gunnar Hägglöff
Private Secretary

What I didn't read to you was the top line: "New York, July 1st, 1938." This letter was sent after the Swedish Royal Visit commemorating New Sweden's 300th anniversary, 50 years ago. I got a copy from Mr. Lennart Fornander in January, 1986, when Carroll and I were in Sweden for the 298th anniversary of Swedenborg's birthday. I had been invited by the Scandinavian Swedenborg Society to speak at the House of Nobles in Stockholm, but Rev. Björn Boyesen, when he heard we were coming, called our home and invited me to preach in Jönköping the Sunday preceding the lecture. We were very fortunate to be invited by Lennart and Wainy to be their guests. On Saturday, they held an open house lasting from 12 noon until 10 at night, to which old friends from various places in Sweden, even Denmark, came to welcome us. We also received a warm letter of welcome from Oscar Mattson and the Gothenburg group.

*Presented at Glen Tonche on Friday, September 25th, 1987, and read simultaneously to the Bryn Athyn Society in its annual meeting.

I tell you this so that you will understand the setting in which an idea was born. Lennart brought out this letter not only as a matter of history, but as a question about the possibility of a visit of the Swedish Royal Couple to Bryn Athyn during the New Sweden 1988 Royal Visit.

The next Wednesday in Stockholm, at the banquet after the lecture, Carroll and I sat with Swedish Ambassador to China, Mr. Lars Bergquist (whom many of you met early this year when he spoke to the Bryn Athyn community and the College). I asked him to write up the protocol for a letter from Bishop King to the Royal Couple, inviting them to visit Bryn Athyn, in case the Bishop wished to make use of it.

Bishop King sent a letter in March 1986, and after about a month, a reply came, saying that it had been referred to a committee headed by the speaker of the Parliament. After this, we heard nothing at all from about April 1986 until April 1987. We were beginning to lose hope.

In late April, after I was appointed by Bishop Buss to act as courier to bring back the original Swedenborg manuscripts now on display at Glencairn, I asked Bishop King for a copy of the letter of invitation he had sent more than a year earlier, and took it with me. Fortunately, Count Peder Bonde, the man in charge of "New Sweden '88," was in town and willing to receive me—this was Friday, May 8th. I showed him the copy of Bishop King's letter of early 1986 and of the reply sent in March. He was surprised he had never seen them, but said there had been some confusion due to changes in the committee, and that he had taken over the task of organizing the royal visit just a year ago.

Count Bonde was apologetic when he explained that the time had already been fully booked—only one day (April 13th, 1988) being planned for Philadelphia at the Swedish Museum, where there would be various festivities, including a luncheon. The only possibility he saw was for Queen Silvia to come out for a short visit to Bryn Athyn at a time when the King would be occupied at the University.

Asked what we had in mind for her to do, I explained that she could visit the Cathedral and the Glencairn Museum, but that one very important thing was the new Library building just now under construction, containing the Academy's Swedenborgiana collection in a wing of its own—no doubt the largest collection of its kind in the world. It would seem very appropriate for her to do something in recognition of this memorial to Swedenborg and its significance to

Sweden—such as a public introduction to the world.

We read in *Arcana Coelestia*:

There are two things which are predicated of the Lord, namely that He is King and that He is Priest; King or Royalty signifies holy truth, Priest or Priesthood signifies holy good; the former is the spiritual Divine, the latter the celestial Divine. (1728)

All kings ..., by the royalty itself that appertains to them, represent the Lord; in like manner all priests..., by the priestly office itself. (3105e)

By kings, the Lord is represented as to truth, the Divine truth being royalty itself (n. 1672, 1728, 2015, 2069, 3670, 4581). (4876e)

Careful reflection on these and similar passages makes it quite clear that a building dedicated by Priesthood and introduced by Royalty is fully consecrated indeed. What is looked to on this occasion is what Bishop King has chosen to call the formal public opening of the new Library to worldwide Swedenborgiana scholarship.

At this point, the Royal Couple had not yet been consulted about this proposal, and it was almost three months later, in fact eighteen days after Bishop King's visit to Count Bonde in Stockholm on August 3rd (together with his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Neil Buss), that I received a phone call from Mr. Bonde. August 21st, he had spent the afternoon with the Queen and King going over the plan, and had found them agreeable and even enthusiastic, even though they were not very happy about the fact that they would thus be going separate ways.

The true significance of this coming event is something that should be sought on a deeper plane than the obvious honor which the presence of royalty bestows upon our community as a geographic entity or the resulting enhancement of its image. We shouldn't forget that this event is in honor of Emanuel Swedenborg and what he represents, and will represent increasingly in the future, to a world whose very existence is imperiled by reason of its own evils and its failure to abide in the Word of God: the Book of books. This introduction or public opening of the Swedenborg Library by the Swedish Crown is therefore, ultimately, an honoring of the Lord God, and looks to the establishment of His kingdom on earth and in the heavens. ■