

The Lancaster New Church (Swedenborgian)

by Dr. Scott T. Swank

CHAPTER I.

The history of Swedenborgianism, a faith based on Emanuel Swedenborg's interpretation of Christianity, begins in Western Europe in the eighteenth century, where Deism was a prominent religious philosophy in intellectual circles. Deism, a rational amalgamation of progressive religious and scientific thought, infected the aristocratic and intellectual elites of Europe to the consternation of the orthodox, whether Catholic or Protestant. Even those scientific men who did not fully embrace Deism as a religious faith could not escape its influence in their thought and work.

Not all enlightened men abandoned Christianity in the face of deistic criticism. Unable to accept orthodoxy as it existed, or Deism, or free-thinking rationalism, a few men tried to develop a meaningful Christian position for themselves. Rather than allow the ship to sink into oblivion, they effected a major resolution in their own concept of Christianity and endeavored to clean the barnacles of tradition from the Church.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a Swedish engineer, scientist, politician, inventor, and rationalist mystic, was one such man. He jettisoned a brilliant political and scientific career in order to reinterpret the Christian religion. His new world-view bound spirit and matter equally into an inseparable whole, ending the spirit-matter dichotomy which plagued Deists and Christians alike.

As a scientist Swedenborg had worked through chemistry and anatomy in an effort to uncover the link between body, mind, and soul. After diligent effort, Swedenborg had concluded from his research that reason could take him no farther in the search for truth. In 1743 in Amsterdam a "Great Vision of Christ" uprooted Swedenborg from his past and set him aside for the experience of divine revelation. Another vision of "The Final Judgment" in 1757 led to a final break with organized religion.¹ However, the separation was not yet apparent, for Swedenborg continued to perform his normal political duties as a member of the Swedish Diet. His spare time

was devoted to writing and publishing anonymously a series of Latin works elaborating his new position.

During the 1760's, as his writings circulated among the intellectual circles of Western Europe and his name became known, the intensity of the personal and philosophical attacks against Swedenborg increased markedly. German thinkers of the stature of Immanuel Kant challenged him from abroad, and Lutherans at home brought charges of heresy against him.² In spite of the opposition Swedenborg continued to write prolifically until his death in 1772.

Quite naturally Lutherans were not eager to applaud Swedenborg. The fundamental tenets of the New Church assaulted the very heart of orthodox Protestantism. For example, Swedenborg stressed the unity of God, insisting that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity postulated three gods. The focus of worship for Swedenborg was Jesus Christ, the Lord of the New Testament and the Jehovah of the Old Testament.³ He recognized a trinity, but it was a trinity of "essentials" of one deity; namely, Divine Good, Divine Truth, and the Divine Operation which emanates from the union of the other two.⁴

Swedenborg also denied the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, the orthodox position which was based on the literal sense of Scripture. Christ's work was not to reconcile and appease the Father; rather, he opened the door for man to achieve salvation through a process of cooperative regeneration. The initial step for man was still faith, not blind belief but conviction based on the rational choice of a man in freedom. However, Swedenborg felt that man could only discern what sentiments to endorse "rationally" if he were "in illumination from the Lord."⁵

In addition to faith, charity was a prerequisite for salvation. Charity expressed itself as an affection for the good; good as that which was useful for society as a whole. Because of the emphasis on charity and its effect—good works—Swedenborg discarded the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Regeneration followed a life of adherence to the Lord's commandments, not one sudden act of faith. It was the culmination of all of life's choices. Obedience to the Lord meant more than external conformity, for man was expected to "will well" and "act well." One had to search his motives and repudiate those actions springing solely from his natural self-love.⁶

Even though Swedenborg's doctrinal system challenged orthodox Christianity directly, his world-view was still distinctly Christian. From this novel position Swedenborg also confronted Deism, but his main thrust was not at the specifics of Deism. He boldly attacked their concept of truth. Swedenborg's own concept has been labeled "Empirical Revelation" by a leading Swedenborg scholar, because it encompassed the rational, scientific, physical side of reality as well as the mystical, spiritual side. Swedenborg regarded

physical and psychical experiences as equally valid, even fully compatible, since man himself was both spirit and matter.⁷

The idea of "Empirical Revelation" was not accepted by all men revolting against Deism; in fact, Swedenborg's theory found formidable opposition everywhere it spread. The most favorable receptions for Swedenborg's ideas were in England and America.

CHAPTER II.

Bell's Book Store, in Third Street near St. Paul's Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the scene of America's first exposure to the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The date was June 5, 1784. James Glen, an English planter in what is now Guyana, South America, did the preaching on that memorable occasion. Glen had become interested in Swedenborg by reading his **Heaven and Hell** on the trip to London, then in London he had met regularly with a society of readers of Swedenborg. On the way back to South America he had decided to conduct a brief preaching tour in Boston and Philadelphia to share the exciting, new ideas.⁸

The visits to these two major United States ports probably did not appear so momentous to James Glen, for attendance and interest were skimpy. But in Philadelphia at least four people responded favorably to Glen's presentation or to the books he had sent to Bell's Book Store after his departure. The four were Miers Fisher, Francis Bailey, Thomas Vickroy, and John Young.⁹

Frances Bailey (1744-1817), one of the most important pioneers of the New Church in America, was born and reared in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania where he learned the printing trade at the famous Ephrata Cloister press. Later he served as State Printer while living in Philadelphia. He also utilized his skills for the New Church, for he printed the first American editions of several New Church works.¹⁰ As important as his printing work was, however, it took second place to Bailey's personal impact. Through his family and friends Bailey was to operate as a one man training school for the New Church.

The spread of Swedenborg's ideas from London via James Glen, then outward from Philadelphia, illustrates the general pattern of cultural transmission in the new United States. This transmission usually flowed from London to the three or four Eastern ports of the United States, then inland along established transportation routes to the key commercial centers of the interior. Understandably, New Church societies sprang up in coastal cities such as Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Charleston; in commercial centers in the West such as Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis; and in small towns along major transportation routes such as Lan-

caster and Bedford in Pennsylvania, Steubenville in Ohio, and La-Porte in Indiana.

While the radiation from London may have been the general pattern of cultural transmission in the late eighteenth century, it was not the only one. German settlements were especially vulnerable to the writings of Immanuel Tafel of Germany, as developments in St. Louis, Baltimore, and Lancaster reveal.

The origins of the New Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania were completely German, although they ceased to be so when Frances Bailey retired to his family estate in Lancaster County about 1800. Lancaster County was a haven for Germans of every description—Lutherans, Reformed, Moravians, Mennonites, Amish, Dunkards, Seventh-Day Baptists, and others. The first known New Churchman was a Prussian army officer named Count Henry von Buelow. During his brief stay in Lancaster, von Buelow had the opportunity to read and discuss Swedenborg with many leading German citizens. At least three “receivers” resulted from those contacts: William Reichenbach, Jacob Carpenter, and Frederick Damish.

John Christian William Reichenbach emigrated to Lancaster about 1785, where he secured a position as Professor of Mathematics and German Literature at Franklin College (now Franklin and Marshall College).¹¹ His friendship with von Buelow resulted in Reichenbach’s reception of Swedenborg’s teachings, and Reichenbach even translated one of von Buelow’s New Church treatises from Latin into German and had it published.¹² But by this time von Buelow had returned to Germany.

Little else is known of Reichenbach’s New Church activities in Lancaster, for except for the books he donated to Franklin College’s initial library, and some poetry, his personal manuscripts seem to have been destroyed.¹³ However, Reichenbach’s pioneering work for the New Church in Lancaster was considerable. As a college professor married into Lancaster’s social elite,¹⁴ Reichenbach demonstrated to Lancaster that a receiver of Swedenborg was not a community liability. For example, he worked closely with General Edward Hand in formulating a proposal that Lancaster be the national capital of the United States. His survey map of Lancaster accompanied Hand’s letter to Philadelphia when the request was finally made.¹⁵

Reichenbach did help prepare the people of Lancaster for a Swedenborgian in their midst, and he was probably the single most important man in Lancaster New Church history in terms of his stature in the community. But the other men who had taken Buelow seriously were socially prominent as well. Frederick Damish, for example, taught music in Lancaster and was remembered as the man who introduced printer Joseph Ehrenfried to Swedenborg.¹⁶

Ehrenfried, later affectionately called “Father” by Lancaster New Church people, was one of the “most intelligent” receivers in

Lancaster from his reception of the Doctrines in 1816 until his death in 1862.¹⁷ He had been born in Germany in 1783, but had emigrated to the United States about 1802 where he took up printing. William Hamilton, editor of the **Lancaster Journal**, and a protege of Benjamin (Lightning Rod, Jr.) Bache in Philadelphia, was the one who invited Ehrenfried to Lancaster. He wanted Ehrenfried to edit a German Federalist paper, **Der Volksfreund**.¹⁸

Even though Hamilton and his projects fell on hard times, Ehrenfried was able to establish himself in Lancaster. Then he served as State Printer during the administration of Governor Joseph Ritner (1835-1839), and as publisher of the state administration newspaper on into the 1840's. About 1845 he returned permanently to Lancaster where he received the post of Deputy Register of Wills.¹⁹ By 1850 Ehrenfried was retired from publishing, except for the New Church projects of his own such as his translation into German of Samuel Noble's **Lectures**.²⁰

Ehrenfried and Reichenbach were alike in many respects. Both had to plow the stubborn, conservative soil of Lancaster County social attitudes as New Church pioneers, and both succeeded admirably in reaching an elite position. In both cases marriages to widows helped. Ehrenfried married Mrs. Ann Smith, the former Ann Hubley, whereas Reichenbach had married Mrs. Elizabeth Graeff. Both men were thus able to break down some of the hostility to the New Church with their intelligence, urbanity, and civic loyalty. And both were able to serve the greater New Church with their printing and translating endeavors.

In spite of their eminence, Reichenbach's and Ehrenfried's religious views were never accorded the same recognition as were the men themselves. The Lancaster elite was solidly Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Presbyterian by the late eighteenth century, and a few holes in the dike were not going to cause this aristocratic wall to crumble. There are no Reichenbachs or Ehrenfrieds in later New Church history. Ann Hubley Ehrenfried refused to even attend services with her husband once a New Church temple was erected. The two would walk to church together but Ann would enter the German Lutheran Church on Duke Street (Trinity), and her husband would continue on to the small temple on East Vine Street.²¹ Such a situation was in sharp contrast to the impact Frances and Eleanor Bailey had on New Church growth because they had built a New Church home which could operate as a missionary center and a training ground for their children.

Another example of the effect of family life on New Church development can be found in the Henry A. Carpenter family of Strasburg and Paradise, Pennsylvania. Henry was a descendent of Jacob Carpenter, and a large landholder in eastern Lancaster County. He also married well, but his wife's family—the Burrowes—quite openly regarded Henry as an "impractical visionary." Mrs. Carpenter

attended New Church services very irregularly, as did her children.²²

As with many other Lancaster New Churchmen, Henry did not let family opposition or apathy deter him. He organized a reading group in the Strasburg area, and when the Lancaster Society formally organized in 1836 he eagerly supported the effort.²³ He was not present though on February 14, 1836, when the small Lancaster circle met at the home of Henry Keffer to draw up the following three broad articles of faith:

I. That God is One is essence and in person, and that He is the Lord God, the Saviour Jesus Christ.

II. That the Word or Sacred Scripture is essential truth; that it is written according to the correspondence of natural things with celestial and spiritual; and that it thus contains three distinct senses,—the Celestial, Spiritual, and the natural; which are adapted to all the various states of Angels and Men.

III. That man is to be regenerated and saved by the life of charity, which is a life according to the precepts of the decalogue, in the full belief and acknowledgement that the power to will and to do, is of the Lord alone.²⁴

One week later the fledgling society incorporated the writings of Swedenborg into the order of worship.²⁵ Two months after that, on April 17, 1836, the Rev. Manning B. Roche of Philadelphia read the articles of faith and declared the group a regularly-constituted New Church society. At that time there were only six regular members, but completely unaided by outside help they purchased a lot and began to build a small temple for worship.²⁶ The structure was completed in 1837.

The original membership included Ehrenfried, William Girling, a former Methodist minister who served as the society's first leader, Henry Keffer, Louis Jungerich (or Jungerich), and probably John Henry Young. Of these, Keffer was the wealthiest and most prominent at that time. He operated a successful confectionery and bakery on East King Street near the Court House, and was one of Lancaster's leading Masons. In fact he was Master of the local lodge during the Anti-Masonic scare of the early 1830's.²⁷ An indication of his standing in the community is the fact that he was a subject for a Jacob Eichholtz portrait. Also, just before his death in October 1841, Keffer was busy on a grandiose scheme to attract government attention to Lancaster as the site for a National Foundry.²⁸

Keffer was another of the Lancaster New Churchmen whose family looked unsympathetically at the religious activities of the head of the house. His wife Ann was said to have been belligerently "hostile."²⁹ However, the supreme example of a wife frustrating the efforts of worthy New Churchmen in Lancaster was the widow of John Henry Young. Young, a native of Germany and a former Lutheran, died about the time the Lancaster Society organized. He left a legacy to the Society to aid in the erection of a fine temple, with the provision that the property remain in the hands of his wife

until her death.³⁰ Young's widow proceeded doggedly to outlive the entire original society! The fine new temple never was built, and the Vine Street chapel certainly was not suitable for attracting new people of distinction.

In the 1830's the small temple was quite adequate and it remained so into the 1840's, for the society's growth was slow. By 1840, when Lancaster had a population of 8,417, the New Church Society had nine male and one female members. Some of the new additions were Henry A. Carpenter, C. F. Naumann and wife, Frederick J. Kramph, and probably John Robinson and Alexander Officer.³¹ Of these and the original membership, Keffer, Girling, and Young were dead by the end of 1841, and Iungerich, Naumann, and Officer were soon to move away.

Death and migration were two of the crushing contingencies which plagued small New Church societies all over the United States, for the loss of a few key men could easily cripple a society composed of a handful of families. The men who moved from Lancaster left a serious gap there for a time, but they proved to be assets elsewhere.³² Generally New Churchmen planned their migrations carefully, not just to maximize their economic opportunity but to insure religious fellowship. In fact, the two were not unrelated. In nineteenth century America economic prosperity and religious conformity often show a high degree of correlation, and a suspect "Swedenborgian" could anticipate opposition in a community where his rather obscure faith was not known.

These years, 1839-1841, were crucial ones in every way for the Lancaster Society. In addition to deaths and migration it faced two more perennial problems of small New Church societies. The first was the need for pastoral services coupled with the inability to support a minister full time. In 1839 the men in Lancaster offered the Rev. Isaac Worrel of Frankford, Pennsylvania, a rent-free home plus a sum of money to establish him in a small business. They hoped Worrell would be able to support himself after the first year.³³

Isaac Worrell lasted five months in Lancaster. He and his family returned to Frankford on April 1, 1840, and no explanation was entered into the records of the Lancaster Society. From a knowledge of events transpiring in the larger New Church, and subsequent actions of the Lancaster Society, one can ascertain that more than personal animosity or finances was involved. Worrell must have brought to a head the second major issue which confronted the struggling society, namely, affiliation with an association of New Church societies.

Only one such organization existed in 1839 and this General Convention, which dated back to 1817, had monopolized the field since its inception. But a new set of rules of order adopted in 1838 precipitated opposition movements within the New Church which led to the formation of a Central or Middle Convention in 1841, and

the split of the Western Association from the General Convention. Lancaster's decision to withdraw from the General Convention was related to these Rules, for the reason given for the bolt was the lack of "freedom" permitted under the Convention's jurisdiction.³⁴ After severing its ties with the General Convention and Isaac Worrell, who supported the Convention, the Lancaster Society expressed its willingness in June, 1841, to join the newly-organized Central Convention. The final step did not occur until May 1845, but again no interpretation of the delay is offered in the minutes of the Lancaster Society.³⁵

The gap between intention and fulfillment may have been due to deference paid to one individual, probably Henry Carpenter. If his affiliation after 1849 is any indication, Henry probably was always loyal to the General Convention. Whatever the case, Carpenter does not seem to have played a major role in the subsequent history of the Lancaster New Church.³⁶

The bulk of the membership must have been of a different persuasion because their solution to the ministerial problem clearly indicates support for the stand of the Central Convention. In the early 1840's the Lancaster group secured the quarterly services of the Rev. Richard DeCharms of Philadelphia, a man who was one of the architects of the Central Convention.³⁷ Under DeCharm's inspiration, and with the able leadership of some new receivers, most notably Frederick J. Kramph, the Lancaster New Church stabilized itself in the early 1840's. The future looked bright.

Joseph Ehrenfried made the following assessment of the state of the Society in June, 1844.

Holding the even tenor of our way, the public seems to regard us with favor, as unobtruding members of the community, who are free from that sectarian bitterness and religious party spirit which unhappily exist in the old church, . . .

May we ever keep clear of this unchristian spirit, and look upon all our fellow-men with love and forbearance, trusting to the Lord's own time, when there will be but one Christian Church—peace on earth and good will among men.³⁸

Ehrenfried's confident air owed a great deal to the interest of two new readers of Swedenborg. Both were Moravians and men of talent and reputation. These two, Lawrence J. Demuth and William Benade, followed through on their reading and joined the Lancaster Society on April 15, 1845.³⁹

Demuth had been educated in Germany and was truly upper class in manners and taste. In the eyes of at least one of Lancaster's leading New Churchmen, Demuth was of such an aristocratic bearing that his adherence created a "social gulf" between himself and the "mass of the members."⁴⁰

The second of the new members was the son of a Moravian bishop,⁴¹ a young man trained in Moravian schools and steeped in Mor-

avian tradition. At the time he became a receiver he was engaged in teaching in Lancaster. Naturally, with the paucity of ministers in the New Church and the inability of Lancaster to support a man full-time, the addition of Benade was seen as a special gift of Divine Providence. Almost immediately he became the leader of the worship service.

Nor could such an obvious grant of Providence go unnoticed elsewhere in the New Church. The Philadelphia New Church tendered Benade an offer to become their resident pastor and the ambitious young man accepted in 1846. That decision marks the high tide of the Lancaster New Church.

CHAPTER III.

The history of the Lancaster New Church up to 1846 had been basically dogged determination to establish a stable base for the propagation of Swedenborg's ideas. While this did not exclude proselytizing of a moderate, individually-oriented type, the Lancaster men were careful not to force themselves on anyone. Such aggressiveness would perhaps have destroyed what good will they had been building up in the community ever since the turn of the century, and also, force was repugnant to those who believed conviction was based on reason rather than emotion. The one missionary project that the Lancaster group did actively uphold from the time of its incorporation was support for the work of Immanuel Tafel in Germany.

In those early years the only member of the Lancaster Society who could afford to import Tafel's works and distribute them among German-speaking people was Henry Keffer. The results were less than spectacular, largely due to the fact that they were too scholarly and too controversial in light of Tafel's many condemnations of the Old Church. At least this was the opinion of Joseph Ehrenfried.⁴² He felt that Tafel's works should be used to "enlighten Germany on the subject of Eman'l. Swedenborg's mission . . ." After Keffer's death most of the Society must have been of Ehrenfried's persuasion, for Kramph and Iungerich personally paid for sets of Tafel's own works and his translations of Swedenborg to be sent to the libraries of the Universities of Heidelberg and Berlin respectively. In addition, Ehrenfried informed Richard DeCharms in 1842 that the Lancaster Society wanted their contributions to Tafel to be used exclusively for the distribution of his works in Germany.⁴³

Apart from supporting Tafel, with whom some of the Lancaster men were personally acquainted through visits to Germany and direct correspondence, the Lancaster New Church did not systematically contribute to any other missionary endeavor. Its members

were an elite group of self-assured men, with marked good humor and kind tolerance for those who disagreed with them. Evangelistic fervor was simply not part of their make-up or their world view.

The same was generally true elsewhere. First generation receivers throughout the United States were of the same calibre as those in Lancaster and they also avoided much of the sectarian brashness which was so common in nineteenth century American religion. One of the reasons for the extraordinary quality of those first receivers lay in the nature of Swedenborg's writings. Swedenborg himself had been an intellectual giant, and his Latin works could not be read, let alone understood, except in select circles. Not until the first generation had digested those works in order to translate them verbally or orally could Swedenborg become widely known. Even after that process had taken place the doctrines were novel and complex enough that their appeal was restricted to a class of independent and liberal minds.

The whole process of persuasion was made so much easier by the fact that Swedenborg presented the seeker with a comprehensive world view at an opportune time in intellectual history. Both Deism and orthodox Christianity were failing to explain the rapid changes which seemed to be leading religion and science to a momentous, head-on clash. An intellectual vacuum developed in the sense that no one world view held men's allegiance. A phantasmagoria of ideas were tossed into it to crash and tumble like dice in a cup, issuing forth in new combinations. Swedenborgianism was one of the more attractive of these combinations.

First generation receivers of Swedenborg, reared in another world view, found the change exhilarating and compelling. The founding of a new movement and new institutions inspired energetic exploits and driving activity called their full potential into operation. The challenge provided deep-seated satisfaction and purpose as these stalwarts immortalized themselves in their new creation. All sorts of problems arose with the second generation, for in many cases it lacked the same kind of vigor and vision.

The second generation relied more on organization than charisma, tending to freeze the accomplishments of the "Founding Fathers." Change became not only more difficult but more dangerous since reformers were placed in the delicate position of appearing to contradict the ideals of the heroes of the movement. Every step involved the risk of inaugurating internal strife and creating two movements instead of altering the one. To complicate matters, the second generation attracted men of like quality, just as the first generation had done, and the whole movement seemed to decline in intellectual vigor and become narrower in outlook.

William Benade of Lancaster was one of the most outstanding of the second generation men, and he illustrates the point that these men lacked the tolerant liberal spirit of the first generation. How-

ever, Benade was a convert from another faith and in this connection he had the same fulfilling commitment to a new cause that had sparked the drive of the first generation. Betrayed by the falsities of the Old Church, Benade was not about to exercise any tolerance toward it, nor toward the misguided New Churchmen who wanted to compromise the unique world view of Swedenborg. Benade certainly did not lack vigor or vision.

After moving to Philadelphia, Benade had openly identified himself with the Central Convention and the ideas of Richard DeCharms. When the Convention officially died in 1852, Benade never gave up the hope of a new organization more solidly rooted. In December, 1855, he and the Rev. N. C. Burham issued a circular to New Church societies calling for a general assembly of delegates in Philadelphia in June 1856. Except for a strong emphasis on education as a vital New Church function, the circular contained little that was unfamiliar to those who had been associated with the old Central Convention.⁴⁴

Since the Lancaster Society had supported the earlier movement, and since Benade was their regular quarterly minister,⁴⁵ as well as a personal friend, the warm approval of the new venture by Ehrenfried and Kramph was natural. Kramph was "most happy" that an organization was being built upon "principles which I consider strictly in accordance with the Writings." He also ardently endorsed the particular emphasis on New Church education and baptism.⁴⁶ Ehrenfried was just as strong in his commendation.⁴⁷

When the summer assembly met that June, Kramph, S. S. Rathvon (Kramph's close friend and foreman of his tailoring establishment), and Henry Carpenter were present from Lancaster to watch the birth of the new organization, only to find the baby still-born. The meeting drew a slight response and was overshadowed by a meeting across the street where Republicans were nominating John C. Fremont as their initial standard-bearer. As the New Church group was settling down to serious deliberation the key personality in the Old Central Convention appeared.

Rev. (Richard) DeCharms entered the meeting room with a pocket full of documents which he submitted to the meeting, occupying its whole time and literally absorbing it, so that nothing was seen or done except what he did himself in apostolically dividing the geographical world, and appointing a great convocation at London in 1859 and 1860.⁴⁸

Rathvon and Kramph both expressed disgust over DeCharms' imprudent behavior, Rathvon privately in his diary,⁴⁹ and Kramph in a letter to Benade concerning the new Cherry Street school Benade had opened in Philadelphia. Each in his own way questioned the state of DeCharms' mind. Kramph opined that DeCharms' failure to support the school might be one of its greatest assets.

Mr. D. Ch. . . Use as a Minister is come to an End, & . . . no church

matters will prosper where he has any thing to with them, the last evidence of which is our last June Convention. . .⁵⁰

Later in the same letter, he added, "DeCharms is to be pitied for he seems of late to be in want of common Sence & sound judgment."⁵¹

Kramph's opinion in this regard would have been of special importance for future Lancaster action, for in the years since 1846 he had become one of the most respected men in the small society. Born near Heidelberg, Germany in 1811, and reared in an orphan asylum before becoming a tailor's apprentice, Kramph certainly did not have a very auspicious beginning in life.⁵² In 1832 he arrived penniless in America and made his way on foot from Baltimore to York where John Bell, a tailor from Marietta, hired him. While in Marietta, Kramph met Simon Snyder Rathvon, one of John Bell's apprentices.⁵³

Kramph moved on to New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, in 1833, where he became a naturalized citizen and a "receiver" of Swedenborg. His intention up to that point had been to move West, but New Churchmen in Lancaster persuaded him to move there instead. He did so in 1840, establishing a merchant tailoring business which prospered.⁵⁴ This change in plans proved to be crucial for Kramph's former friend, Rathvon, for Kramph brought him to Lancaster as his foreman and introduced him to Swedenborg's teachings.⁵⁵ Rathvon served as lay leader of the Lancaster New Church from 1856 to his death in 1891.

In addition to the contributions he made personally, and the indirect effect he had through others he brought into the New Church, Kramph was one of the few Lancaster men to be able to establish a New Church home. His first wife, Ann Robinson, was the daughter of an English New Church minister serving in Darby, Pennsylvania. They were married in 1841 and had two sons and two daughters before Ann died in June, 1847, following one each of her sons and daughters into death.⁵⁶ Kramph wasted little time in remarrying, this time choosing another of Rev. John Robinson's daughters. His new wife, Mary, died in childbirth November 9, 1849, barely out-living the baby girl that died some months later.⁵⁷

Richard DeCharms had performed the marriages and it was the same resourceful man who introduced Kramph to his third wife, Sarah Pancoast of Cincinnati.⁵⁸ This time death claimed Frederic Kramph. The date was April 18, 1858, another day in the history of the Lancaster New Church comparable to the day Benade left to take his Philadelphia pastorate. The entire community felt the loss because Kramph had been an active Whig, a former member of City Council, a building contractor, an honest businessman, and at the time of his death a member of the Lancaster School Board.⁵⁹

Two factors apart from the loss of means and leadership made Kramph's demise especially memorable for the Lancaster Society: his will and the opportunity his death afforded his father-in-law to assert himself in Lancaster New Church affairs. The will, ⁶⁰ made in



Kramph's Hall at Northeast corner of N. Queen and E. Orange Streets as it appeared in 1850.

1854 and specifying S. S. Rathvon as executor, left the bulk of Kramph's estate to a future New Church school to be located near Philadelphia. However, by the time Mrs. Kramph died, the New Church had split into two distinct branches, Rathvon was dead, and the composition of the estate's board of trustees had been altered by the appointments of Mrs. Kramph.

The two groups that subsequently battled for the thousands of dollars involved were the General Convention and the General Church of Pennsylvania or the "Academy." The scandal involved left a deep scar on the reputation of the local society as well as the entire New Church.⁶¹

The second problem resulting from Kramph's death was apparent much more quickly than the one raised by the legacy. Many years later S. S. Rathvon reminisced bitterly about Kramph's father-in-law, David Pancoast.

The advent of Mr. J. in Lancaster, was one of quite unnecessary, and often bitter contention, and I have never been able to see that it ever did the Society any good.⁶²

Pancoast was a perfect example of the principle stated earlier that in a small society death and migration could prove to be disastrous.

David Pancoast's influence was augmented by the fact that he

was Kramph's relative and by virtue of his past experience in New Church affairs in Cincinnati. But even more decisive was the principle of unanimity by which the small Lancaster Society ruled itself in order to prevent disharmony and dissolution. A stubborn man could clog the organizational machinery quickly in such a system and Pancoast was just such a man.

Rathvon and Pancoast clashed frequently. With Ehrenfried becoming more feeble each year these two men vied uncontested for the leadership of the Lancaster Society. For example, Pancoast wanted to drop baptism as a membership requirement, whereas Rathvon felt it was necessary, and Pancoast persistently blocked the society's desire to join the Pennsylvania Association of the General Convention, to Rathvon's dismay.⁶³ The other members of the society acquiesced with Pancoast to keep harmony, but in 1865 after his death the Lancaster New Church joined the Pennsylvania Association.

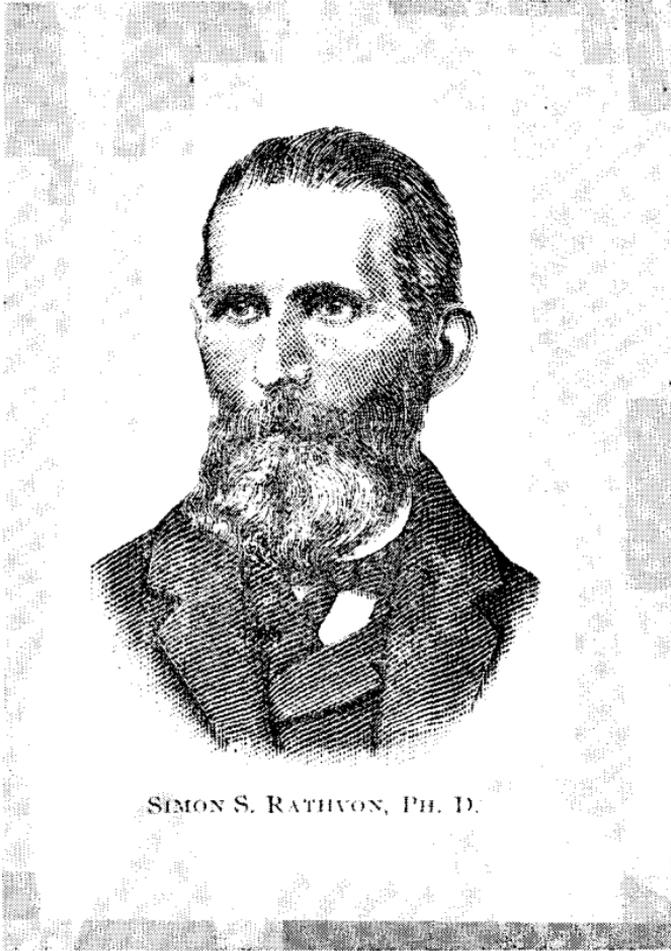
Rathvon believed the society suffered an irreparable injury during the years 1858-1865, which he labeled the "bitter course of anguish."

. . . I had never met with such treatment from . . . outsiders, as I had met from one who assumed to be a member of the Lord's New Church. And yet, I do not think, nor did I ever think, that Mr. P. was at heart a bad man; but he suffered himself to be ruled for the time being, by obstinate and contentious spirits. He had a strong love of rule; and . . . seemed to think that others (especially the priesthood) were under the influence of a similar love, and that it was his mission to thwart them. Endowed with official functions, and left to exercise them in his own way, he was as interesting and warmhearted a man as one may wish to meet at anytime.⁶⁴

Disagreement between the two men was not confined to New Church matters alone, although the struggle between the two there was more pronounced because it was a one to one situation. Their straightforward power struggle over who should have the decisive authority in calling a new minister was a case in point.⁶⁵ But the two protagonists also happened to stand on opposite sides of the political fence. Rathvon was a Buchanan Democrat who supported Breckenridge in 1860.⁶⁶ Pancoast, a rabid anti-slavery Republican, minced no words in his condemnation of the political views of his arch-rival Rathvon and a new receiver named Lewis Falk who sympathized with Rathvon.

. . . **Falk** (sic) went to Georgia to make clothes for their soldiers, and upon his return I took him to task for doing so, when Rathvon turned in to justify him, and encouraged him, so far, that he went about the streets advocating the rights of the South, until he came near getting lynched. . . . If Rathvon would acknowledge he has made use of improper words, and advocated a bad cause, I could forgive, but until then he will never read another Sermon to me. I cannot tolerate or fellowship with a **traitor** to his country If I had the power and had a Brother in or out of the Church who should prove a **traitor** I would hang him.⁶⁷

This strong language emerged from a man who was more than a hearthside patriot. Although he was too old to serve in the military, Pancoast offered his services to the Union as a river pilot. At the time he wrote the letter castigating Rathvon and Falk he was waiting for a reply to his offer.⁶⁸ If Rathvon ever had a desire to



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hang Pancoast he kept it a secret, but he was not sorry to see agitation cease and harmony return with his gadfly's death in 1865.⁶⁹

Peace was restored in the Lancaster Society even though Pancoast's family remained and in fact was added to with the coming of Rev. N. C. Burnham and his wife (Mary Pancoast) in 1865. Rathvon described Pancoast's wife, Eliza, as "the very opposite of her husband" since she was "sweet" and "kind." Sarah Pancoast Kramph, on the other hand, was a "chip off the old block" in that she could be as adamant as her father. Fortunately, she and her father had often been on the opposite sides of an issue.⁷⁰

Even relative internal peace was not enough to instill new life into the Lancaster Society, and after the Civil War the Society slowly declined. William Benade, after a visit to Lancaster in 1865, had predicted as much since it was evident to any observer that no young members were being brought into the group.⁷¹ There is absolutely no evidence extant to suggest that the Lancaster New Church ever again approached the potential which it appeared to be ready to fulfill in the years 1846 and 1856.

In retrospect, the single most important contribution of Lancaster to the whole New Church was William Benade. Benade was to actively promote the strain of New Church thought which he embraced in Lancaster in 1845, and which the Lancaster Society adhered to throughout the whole period from 1845 to 1865. Lancaster's history makes an interesting case study of the external and internal forces operative on New Churchmen from the introduction of Swedenborg's ideas into the United States until 1865, but other societies had a more decisive impact on the whole New Church than powerless Lancaster.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

- ¹ Signe Toksvig *Emanuel Swedenborg*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 139-141, 150, 154.
- ² Cyril Odhner Sigstedt, *The Swedenborgian Epic: The Life and Works of Emanuel Swedenborg*. (N.Y.: Bookman Associates, 1952), pp. 301, 343, 400-402.
- ³ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion: Containing The Universal Theology of the New Church*. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1879), pp. 139-140.
- ⁴ Emanuel Swedenborg, "The Lord," *The Four Leading Doctrines of the New Church*. (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1842), pp. 81-83.
- ⁵ Swedenborg, "Faith," *Four Doctrines*, pp. 5, 18-19.
- ⁶ Swedenborg, "Life," *Four Doctrines*, p. 11.
- ⁷ Robert Kirven, *Emanuel Swedenborg and the Revolt Against Deism*. (unpublished ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1965), pp. 16, 21.

CHAPTER II

- ⁸ Jonathan Bayley, *New Church Worthies*. (London: James Speirs, 1884), p. 110.
- ⁹ Carl T. Odhner, *Annals of the New Church, 1688-1850*. (Bryn Athyn, Pa.: Academy of the New Church, 1904), p. 121.

Miers Fisher (1748-1819) was a Quaker lawyer who served as a Philadelphia City Councilman and as a member of the Pennsylvania legislature in addition to his business activities. He actively pursued legislation favoring schools, roads, hospitals, and the gradual emancipation of slaves. See Henry Simpson, *The Lives of Eminent Philadelphians Now Deceased*. (Philadelphia: William Brotherhead, 1859), pp. 359-361. Diaries at Swarthmore College.

- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 146.
- ¹¹ Alexander Harris, *Biographical History of Lancaster County*. (Lancaster, Pa.: Elias Barr and Co., 1872), p. 476.
- ¹² The authorship of this rare book is disputed. S. S. Rathvon of Lancaster felt that *Agathon* (Joseph Ehrenfried, 1812) was really Reichenbach's work. (Rathvon to Burnham, Nov. 16, 1868, SSRA). Copies of *Agathon* can be found in the Academy Library, Bryn Athyn and in the Franklin and Marshall College Rare Book Collection.
- ¹³ Reichenbach served as the first librarian for Franklin College and donated some fifty volumes to start its collection which are still in the possession of the present Franklin and Marshall College. The papers that were not destroyed were sent to Urbana University, Ohio, by S. S. Rathvon, except for some poetry inserted in Rathvon's unpublished autobiography in the Lancaster County Historical Society.
- ¹⁴ Harris, *Lancaster County*, p. 475.
- ¹⁵ David McNeely Stauffer, *The Documentary History of the Borough* (copy of original minutes in mayor's office), p. 95. This work is an abstract of borough minutes from 1742 to 1818 which shows that Reichenbach and Edward Hand also served together as burgesses on the town council.
- ¹⁶ "Documents for New Church History," *The Newchurchman II*, (1843), p. 42.
- ¹⁷ Rathvon to Benade, May 10, 1887, AA. Ehrenfried was highly respected throughout the New Church. He attended numerous Conventions, subscribed to the leading New Church magazines, and kept in touch officially with key New Church leaders. In 1871 T. S. Arthur used Ehrenfried's name for the main character of his *Talks With a Philosopher on the Ways of God to Man* (Phila.: J. B. Lippincott, 1871).
- ¹⁸ Franklin Ellis and Samuel Evans, *History of Lancaster County*. (Philadelphia: Everetts and Peck, 1883), p. 500.
- ¹⁹ Harris, *Lancaster County*, pp. 186-7.
- ²⁰ In 1850 Ehrenfried issued a prospectus on a translation into German of some of Samuel Noble's lectures which he desired to publish by subscription. (Ehrenfried to Carpenter, June 29, Oct. 24, 1850, Feb. 11, 1851, AA) The work never was printed.
- ²¹ Rathvon to Benade, May 10, 1887, AA.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ "Minutes of the Lancaster Society," *The Kramph Will Case: Testimony*. (Lancaster, Pa.: The Examiner Printing House, 1908), pp. 140, 142.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.
Ehrenfried to DeCharms, Mar. 31, 1842, AA.
- ²⁷ George Welchans and Andrew Hershey, *History of Lodge No. 43 F. & A. M. of Lancaster, Pa.* (Lancaster: The Lodge, 1936), p. 341.
- ²⁸ Frederic Shriver Klein, *Lancaster County Since 1841*, rev. ed. (Lancaster, Pa.: The Lancaster National Bank, 1955), p. 9.
- ²⁹ Rathvon to Benade, May 10, 1887, AA.
- ³⁰ "Documents," *Newchurchmen, II* (1843), p. 45.
- ³¹ *Kramph Will Case*, p. 144.

In Rochester, New York, the twin forces of death and migration thwarted the formal organization of a New Church Society by removing six key men within a six months' span. (See Reynolds to Bush, Dec. 30, 1854, V. 15, *Bush Letterbooks*, SSRA).

The Detroit Society was organized in 1839 under reasonably favorable circumstances, but by 1842 it was virtually non-existent. Between 1840 and 1842 the leader of the group returned to New York state and four other families moved to other parts of Michigan and to Wisconsin. Only five or six women remained to carry the load. Then in 1843 the situation began to improve with a new eastern influx. See George Field, *Memoirs, Incidents,*

and *Reminiscences of the Early History of the New Church in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Adjacent States; and Canada.* (New York: E. H. Swinney, 1879), pp. 100-101.

These two examples help illustrate the great mobility of 19th century Americans, both horizontally and vertically.

³² Nauman, Lungerich, and Officer figured prominently in the history of the St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Chicago societies respectively.

³³ *Kramph Will Case*, p. 144.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁶ In 1856 Henry A. Carpenter was listed as a member of the three-man Ecclesiastical Committee of the Lancaster Society under its new Constitution. See *Constitution and By-laws of the New Jerusalem Society of the City of Lancaster.* (William B. Wiley, 1857) in the pamphlet collection of the Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, Mass. However, it is not known whether this is father or son. After the Civil War the only H. A. Carpenter in General Convention records is one living in Iowa.

³⁷ *Kramph Will Case*, pp. 146-7.

³⁸ "Lancaster Report," *Central Convention Journal of Proceedings*, V. 6 (1844), Appendix II, No. VIII, p. 32.

³⁹ *Kramph Will Case*, p. 153.

⁴⁰ Rathvon to Benade, May 10, 1887, AA.

⁴¹ Bishop Andrew Benade served as the general pastor of the Lititz, Pa. Moravian Church from 1813 to 1822; as a bishop in Salem, North Carolina, 1822-1826; bishop in Lititz, 1826-1836; and from 1836 to 1849 in Bethlehem as the governing bishop of the entire church. He retired in 1849 and died in 1859 (age 91) a receiver of Swedenborg. C. T. Odhner, "William Henry Benade," *New Church Life*, V. 25 (1905), pp. 450-451.

CHAPTER III

⁴² Ehrenfried to Carpenter, June 29, 1850, AA.

⁴³ Ehrenfried to DeCharms, March 31, 1842, AA.

⁴⁴ Nathan C. Burnham and William Benade, *Circular to the Receivers of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem in the United States.* (Phila.: n.p. 1855), 8 pp.

⁴⁵ Rathvon to Benade, March 21, 1855, AA.

⁴⁶ Kramph to Benade, April 29, 1856, AA.

⁴⁷ Ehrenfried to Benade, April 30, 1856, AA.

⁴⁸ *Kramph Will Case*, p. 171.

Samuel Snyder Rathvon, *Autobiography.* (unpublished, 1852-1860), p. 375. In this manuscript, located in the Lancaster County Historical Society, Rathvon states that DeCharms' proposed London Convention was to be convened in 1857.

⁴⁹ Rathvon, *Autobiography*, p. 375.

⁵⁰ *Kramph Will Case*, p. 220.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Harris, *Lancaster County*, p. 347.

F. J. Kramph's biography is found in Harris, *Lancaster County*, pp. 347-354, and in Rathvon's *Autobiography*, pp. 602-609. Both are by Rathvon, but the former gives more detail on Kramph's public life whereas the latter is more specific about his personal and religious life.

⁵³ Rathvon, *Autobiography*, pp. 602, 606.

⁵⁴ Harris, *Lancaster County*, pp. 349, 351-2.

⁵⁵ Rathvon, *Autobiography*, p. 603.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 717.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 718.

⁵⁸ Rathvon, *Autobiography*, 602, 692.

⁵⁹ Harris, *Lancaster County*, 354.

⁶⁰ Rathvon, *Autobiography*, p. 605. A printed copy of the will can be found also in *Kramph Will Case: Paper Books and Briefs*, Appendix A p.p. 1-14.

⁶¹ A complete set of the legal documents pertaining to the Kramph Case in the Lancaster Orphan's Court, April term, 1903, and the appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Eastern District, January term, 1909, can be found in the Academy Library, Bryn Athyn, Pa. See also *The Kramph Will Case: The Controversy in Regard to Swedenborg's Work on Conjugal Love*. (Bryn Athyn, Pa.: Academy of the New Church, 1910), 530 pp.

⁶² Rathvon to Benade, May 10, 1887, AA.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Rathvon to Benade, January 25, 1861, AA.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Rathvon, *Autobiography*, p. 674.

⁶⁷ Pancoast to Benade, May 5, 1861, AA.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Rathvon to Benade, March 2, 1861, AA.

⁷⁰ Rathvon to Benade, May 10, 1887, AA.

⁷¹ Benade to Stuart, August 22, 1865, AA.