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SWEDENBORGIANISM AND THE FRONTIER

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I. Swedenborg's Teachings that Influenced the Frontier.

Some forty years ago, Frederic J. Turner, the eminent American historian, called attention to the fact that the religious life of the frontier has not been sufficiently investigated. Since then, much important work in this field has been done. One aspect of the religious life of the frontier, however, has been almost entirely neglected, that of Swedenborgianism, or, as followers of the Swedish prophet prefer to say, that of the New Church. Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm in 1688. Since we are approaching the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of his birth, now is an opportune time to investigate a hitherto neglected influence, very potent on the American frontier during the nineteenth century.

Following the publication in 1850 of Emerson's essay on "Swedenborg the Mystic," Swedenborg has been classified as a mystic; and because of the misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the term *mystic*, he has for the most part been forgotten. Swedenborg, however, cannot so easily be catalogued. A contemporary of Jean Jacques Rousseau, he shared his belief in the doctrine of primitivism; and even more than Rousseau, he made his belief in the superiority of the primitive life a definite part of his creed. A contemporary of Voltaire, he agreed with him as to the essential elements in religion, but like him revolted against institutionalism. When Swedenborg was a boy, he heard of the Quakers, and, although later in life he disagreed with many of their ideas, he always shared their revolt against institutionalism and their freedom to subordinate the letter to the spirit.

During his boyhood, Swedenborg was trained in the Lutheran church, in which his father served first as professor of theology and later as bishop. In the latter office he acted as superintendent of the Swedish missions and churches in Amer-

ica. In this capacity he sent the first Lutheran missionaries to the American colonies. Because of this, his son became interested in the life of the primitive redmen on the far away and newest Swedish frontier.

As a student in Upsala, Swedenborg perfected himself in Greek and Latin. In the former language he worked out his philosophical and theological systems, and in the latter he wrote all his books. Early rejecting the major part of Lutheranism, he told Professor G. A. Beyer, his teacher in Greek at Gottenburg University, that his early belief in God was as follows:

My only belief at that time [at the age of twelve] was that God is the Creator and Preserver of nature and that He endows man with understanding, good disposition, and other resultant qualities. Of the belief that God the Father imputes the righteousness of His Son to whomsoever and whenever He pleases, even to the impenitent, I knew nothing, and had I heard of such a faith, it would have been then, as now incomprehensible to me.

On graduating from the university, he defended a thesis on morals, consisting largely of extracts from Seneca and Publius Syrus Mimus, with his own comments on these writers.

Swedenborg's early theological training was Greek. His *Philosopher's Note Book* is filled with references to Plato, Aristotle, and the other Greek thinkers including Plutarch. He early sensed the fact that John's Gospel is decidedly a Hellenistic treatise, and in all his later writings he put much stress on the *Word*, that is, the Logos in its Greek sense.

With this cultural background, Swedenborg turned to science and became the leading scientist of his day, being appointed director of the government mines of Sweden, an important government position. While acting in this capacity, he covered every phase of science, finally passing through physiology and psychology into theology. His purpose in this latter field was to prove the existence of God and the human soul. Here is the beginning of his important work in the field of "correspondence" which he found in the relation of the soul to the body: he believed that the immortal soul was imaged in the human body as the eternal God is imaged in the immortal soul. By these degrees he sought to explain the relationship of the divine to the human.

In order to clarify and expound this relationship, he began a systematic explanation of the Bible, sensing in a peculiar way

the coming conflict of religion with science. He declared that the spiritual sense is embedded in the physical, as the body and soul, the physical and spiritual, so with the *Word*, the Logos. The physical always has a correspondence to the spiritual. Applying this doctrine of science, he found the internal sense of the word. The *Word* itself is divine truth and appears in several degrees, one degree accommodated to human perception, another to human reason alone. With the freedom of the early churchmen and of Luther, he selected the books in the canon which he believed interpreted this internal sense. His canon included the Pentateuch plus Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, the Psalms, the Prophets plus Lamentations, the four Gospels and the Apocalypse. His many volumes explaining the internal sense were widely read by pioneers during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, and, during the conflict with science, helped countless people to retain their faith in the Bible.

Swedenborg's freedom in the use of the Bible carried even farther his revolt against institutionalism. In more ways than one he was a devout disciple of Luther although, unconsciously at first, in agreement with Rousseau, the Quakers, and Voltaire in their revolt against institutionalism. In Swedenborg's case, however, it was the development of his mystical nature which finally brought about the complete revolt. From 1736 to 1744, like the Hebrew prophets, he saw visions of the spiritual world and felt impelled to reveal what he believed to be his immediate perception of truth. This he put into his dogma of the influx of the mind of God into the human mind. From 1745 on, he devoted himself to the study of the Bible in the original. It was in this year that in his own experience, he spiritually perceived the end of the old church, that is, all organized religion, and the beginning of the New Church which should be founded on the internal sense of the Scriptures. In 1747 he petitioned the king for retirement that he might give his entire time to the elucidation of Scripture. This date marks his official separation from the established, organized church. His final break with organized religion in 1757, known as "the Last Judgment," was not so spectacular as was Emerson's, but each felt that he acted in obedience to the demands of the spirit.

During all this time Swedenborg had also been occupied with politics and economic problems, since for more than fifty

years he served in the Swedish Parliament. While in Parliament, he developed political and social theories which were years beyond his time; and at all times these views were highly valued by the king. He introduced bills on finance, temperance, and on various social questions. For all this he had a philosophical and religious basis. One of his cherished projects was in the direction of temperance or absolute prohibition of alcoholic beverages. To this end he urged so high a tax on the manufacture and sale of whiskey that its production would be curtailed or entirely stopped. That he spent much time and thought on this subject is proved from the following official records:

If the distilling of whiskey—provided the public can be prevailed upon to accede to the measure—were farmed out in all judicial districts, and also in towns, to the highest bidder, a considerable revenue might be obtained for the country, and the consumption of grain might also be reduced: that is, if the consumption of whiskey cannot be done away with altogether, which would be more desirable for the country's welfare and morality than all the income which could be realized from so pernicious a drink.¹

All public houses in town should be like bakers' shops, with an opening in the window, through which those who desire might purchase whiskey or brandy, without being allowed to enter the house, and lounge about the tap-room.²

After his death the following notation was found on the fly-leaf of one of his books:

The immoderate use of spirituous liquors will be the ruin of the Swedish people.

At a later time, members of the New Church were among the leaders in the temperance movement in the United States. One needs only recall the influence of that distinguished Swedenborgian, T. S. Arthur (1809-1885), whose *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* has had a telling effect.

All these reforms, however, were to Swedenborg merely part of a much larger project: the formation of a new social order. A student of the Prophets, he caught the vision of Isaiah's Messianic Age, and to this he added that of Plato's *Republic*. With a prophetic sense, he saw not only the coming clash between religion and science, but also the coming industrial revolution. In 1741 he wrote:

¹ *Memorial to the Diet*, Nov. 17, 1760. Quoted in Tafel, I, 503.

² Address to the Councillor of Mines, S. Sandels, upon resigning the presidency of the Academy of Sciences. April 24, 1782, p. 93. Quoted in Tafel, I, 493-4.

In a perfect form of society, there ought to be not only a variety among all, but such variety that the particulars shall so accord as to constitute, at the same time, a society in which there shall be no want which some one may not supply. Such a form there is in the atmospheric world, or in the macrocosm, and such there is in every body, [i. e., organism] between its constituent parts. . . . In no other way is it possible for a most perfect society, or form of society, to be instituted.³

Again he thought in terms of "correspondence." Society is like the body of a man in which, to have health, all organs must function in strict harmony with each other. The idea of course goes back to the Greeks. He illustrates it later in his theological writings as follows :

To perform use [the human ideal social behavior] is to desire the welfare of others for the common good, and not to perform use is to desire the welfare of others, not for the sake of the common good, but for the sake of self.⁴

Here we have the germ of unselfish co-operation, the "communism" of the early Christians. Again in even more concrete terms he expresses his ideal for the new state of society :

Who does not see that there cannot be found an empire, kingdom, republic, state, or household, that is not established by laws which constitute its order and thus the form of its government? In each one of them the laws of justice are in the highest place, political laws are second, and economical laws in the third; or in comparison with a man, the laws of justice constitute the head, political laws the body, and economic laws the garments; and thus these last, like garments, may be changed.⁵

How modern this last sentence sounds! Many leaders in high office today have recently changed, or are desirous of changing, social and economic "garments." Many, too, today are demanding that individuals learn to work for the common good rather than for personal gain. The consensus of opinion, judged by recent church pronouncements, is that Christianity and the competitive system of exploitation are incompatible. All this Swedenborg pointed out in the eighteenth century.

Nor did he refrain from castigating his own times in these forceful words :

. . . one always seeks the destruction of another, and desires to despoil him of his goods, and when many esteem themselves higher than societies, and imagine that all things exist for themselves alone.⁶

³ *Economy of the Animal Kingdom, (The Soul)*, no. 535.

⁴ *Heaven and Hell*, no. 64.

⁵ *True Christian Religion*, no. 55.

⁶ *The Soul*, no. 557.

From the beginning, Swedenborg emphasized his doctrine of primitivism, being one of the first to develop the concept of the "noble savage." The natural man, he taught, lived the satisfactory, unselfish life in a co-operative society.

To grow rich from the goods of others was entirely unknown in ancient times; . . . but, in succeeding ages, this scene was changed and totally reversed when the lust for power and of possessing the goods of others seized the mind. Then the human race, for the sake of self-preservation gathered together into kingdoms and empires; and as the laws of charity and conscience ceased to act, it became necessary to enact laws to restrain violence, and to propose honors and gains as rewards, and the privations thereof as punishments. When the state of the world was thus changed, heaven itself withdrew from man, and this more and more, even to the present times.⁷

Primitive society and primitive human nature, he believed, were both flawless and orderly; and earthly human behavior corresponded to the heavenly or ideal. Primitive man had the divine and not the human idea of religion as the following contrast shows:

I have heard it announced that at this day a church is being established with many in Africa, and that revelations are made at this day; and that they are receptive of the Heavenly Doctrine, especially concerning the Lord. . . And, as I was attending, I heard that they were expecting a revelation concerning Christ, whom they call the Only Man, from whom every man is a man. . . . Moreover, they knew many things respecting heaven and hell, of which Christians are ignorant. . . . It was afterwards shown in obscure vision how the Heavenly Doctrine would proceed in Africa; namely, towards the interior parts, even to the middle of it; and that it would then proceed towards those who were at the sides on the Mediterranean Sea, but not to the coast; and then, after a time, would turn itself back towards Egypt. . . . That doctrine [of the New Church] does not extend as far as the Africans that dwell near the coasts, since the Christians come thither, who insinuate scandals, and who have a human and not a divine idea concerning the Lord. The Africans are more receptive to the Heavenly Doctrine than others on this earth, because they freely receive the doctrine concerning the Lord, and have it as if implanted in themselves that God will altogether appear as a man. They are in the faculty of receiving truths of faith, and especially its goods, because they are of a celestial disposition. . . . The African race can be in greater enlightenment than others on this earth, since they are such that they think more interiorly, and so receive truths and acknowledge them.⁸

Swedenborg in identifying primitive simplicity and perfectionism with the Africans came to regard them as far su-

⁷ *Arcana Coelestia*, no. 8118.

⁸ *Last Judgment*, I, 115-124. (Written between 1758-1769).

perior to the civilized Europeans in their intuitive grasp of truth. He states it thus:

In Heaven the Africans are the most loved of all the gentiles; they receive the goods and truths of Heaven more easily than the rest; they wish to be called the obedient, not the *faithful*.⁹

By "faithful" he means, of course, those holding to institutional religion with its human creeds and theologies.¹⁰ The sending of missionaries by the old church seemed to him futile, and could only result in harmful ignorance being imposed on the primitive Africans, who intuitively receive the truth by divine influx from heaven. He states the case thus, which may well summarize his belief that the

Heavenly Doctrine will spread itself through Africa and thence into Asia—that the church which now perishes in Europe will be established in Africa, and that this will take place from the Lord alone through revelations, and not through emissaries from Christians.¹¹

The result of Swedenborg's primitivism was humanitarianism. The Swedish government which held him in high regard looked with favor upon an expedition to explore Africa. As early as 1779, his disciples, under the leadership of Karl Wadström, opposed slavery. Wadström, together with Sir Augustus Nordenskjöld, Dr. Spaarman, and Captain Arrehenius, backed by Gustavus III, set out in 1787 for Africa to establish a colony for the purpose of opposing the slave trade. M. de Staël, then Swedish ambassador to Paris, persuaded the French government to send the party on a French steamer to Senegal. In 1788 the party returned with voluminous notes and plans for the Africans. Wadström's books proved to be influential in the fight against slavery. Wadström, the moving spirit of the group, went to England and inspired the disciples of the New Church with the idea of opposing the spread of slavery. Together they laid their plans before William Wilberforce, who lent his aid. Thus the disciples of Swedenborg, together with the Quakers, headed the great anti-slavery movement in Europe.

The importance of Swedenborg's influence lay in his insight into conditions that were destined to come shortly after his death. His early training in Greek thought gave him a sound philosophical basis on which he built his scientific, po-

⁹ *Arcana Coelestia*, no. 2604.

¹⁰ Cf. *True Christian Religion*, nos. 796-800, for his view of Luther, Calvin, etc.

¹¹ *Spiritual Diary*, no. 4777.

litical, and religious systems. Trained in the best scientific thought of his day, he sensed the coming conflict between science and religion, and prepared for it by insisting on the internal rather than the literal sense of the Word in its human form. His freedom in selecting his own canon of Scriptures gave a sanction to the later historical study of Biblical history and literature. His revolt against institutionalism and his advocacy of primitivism made possible the development of free religious and cultural groups for the study of new truth as it came. Eventually, this was to result in the founding of a new organization, which Swedenborg clearly foresaw when he wrote:

'And I John saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of Heaven,' *signifies* a New Church to be established by the Lord at the end of the former [1757], which will be consociated with the New Heaven in Divine truths as to doctrine and as to life.¹²

The New Church, founded upon new revelations, and embracing all the "obedient," would have a sense of freedom which would express itself in doing good in an unselfish way for the community. Since no one member of the new organization would exploit another member, slavery and ruthless competition were automatically forbidden. Since the immoderate use of alcohol would destroy the mental alertness of the individual and blind him to the influx of the spirit, temperance was advocated.

Later, the disciples of Swedenborg on the frontier were to fight for freedom for the slave, for temperance, for the right to accept the findings of science and still hold fast to the Bible. They were also to fight for a new social order in which human values would increasingly be placed above money, greed, and exploitation. The influence exerted by the Swedenborgians on the frontier between the years of 1784, when James Glen introduced the *Word*, into America, and 1850, the date of the publication of Emerson's interpretation of Swedenborg in *Representative Men*, has never been carefully appraised. During these years, however, a large number of Swedenborgian journals of various types were edited and circulated: American editions of the translations of Swedenborg's works, begun in 1789 with Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, and others as subscribers, were spread broadcast from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi Valley; hundreds of reading circles were formed; temper-

¹² *Apocalypse Revealed*, (Rotch edition, 1925), 1015.

ance societies sponsored by members of the New Church sprang up over the same region; agitation against slavery developed among Quakers and Swedenborgians; colonies and "reading circles" putting into practice Swedenborg's social and economic teachings dotted the frontier.

A survey of American literature during the nineteenth century reveals Swedenborgian ideas not only in New England but also on the Western frontier. The following writers, among others, tried to interpret Swedenborg: George Bush, Theophilus Parsons, Amos Bronson Alcott, Sampson Reed, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Greenleaf Whittier, T. S. Arthur, Henry James, Sr., John Bigelow, Charles Dana, W. C. Howells, W. D. Howells, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, and Howard Pyle.

The statement of John Bigelow may well represent the attitude of many a thoughtful man and woman on the frontier during the nineteenth century:

During my lifetime I think I am warranted in saying that the changes wrought in the theology of the Christian world distinctly attributable, under Providence, to the teachings of Swedenborg are more important than those wrought in all the ten centuries immediately preceding his birth.¹³

II. The Story of a Swedenborgian Frontier Colony.

The frontier Swedenborgian colonies founded in the nineteenth century grew out of the strong appeal which the "writings" had for the pioneers. The earliest groups naturally developed the missionary spirit, and both by literature and by personal appeal sent the new teaching across the Alleghenies.

In America the earliest apostle of the New Church was Francis Bailey (1744-1817), a determined missionary who, as editor and publisher of the *Freeman's Journal*, used his paper to introduce the doctrines to large numbers of eager people in the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and even beyond the Alleghenies, in the Ohio Valley. As a friend of Benjamin Franklin, he caught the latter's imagination for the cause. He likewise interested Thomas Jefferson, who was always ready to investigate a new religious or philosophical system. His most famous disciple, however, was Philip Freneau (1752-1832), America's first distinguished poet. For several reasons, the writings of Swedenborg appealed to Freneau. He accepted Swedenborg's doctrine of primitivism, which fitted in-

¹³ *Retrospections of an Active Life*, I, 159.

to his theory that primitive men had a perfect social life. He found in the humanitarian doctrine of Swedenborg an answer to his own benevolent spirit. He discovered in the social and economic ideas of Swedenborg an incentive to his own social radicalism. In short, Freneau looked upon the Swedish mystic as the apostle of the religion of nature and humanity. Reflecting the interest of Bailey's group, Freneau, in the issue of October 4, 1786, of the *Freeman's Journal or the North American Intelligencer*, published his missionary poem, "On the Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg's Universal Theology." The poem states at once the social implications which Freneau found in the teachings of his newly found prophet:

In this choice work the curious eye may find
The noblest system to reform mankind.

Three years later, Bailey determined to bring out an American edition of Swedenborg's *The True Christian Religion*, to the publication of which Jefferson, Franklin, and Morris subscribed. As a result, in 1801, John Chapman (1775-1847), commonly known as "Johnny Appleseed," became a "receiver," and promptly began to carry the teaching throughout the Ohio Valley. By 1838, Swedenborg's writings had found a secure place in the minds and cabins of the pioneers as far west as Indiana, and in 1839 the Illinois Association was formed. By 1850, every state east of the Mississippi had active "reading groups" or organized societies.

To the mouth of the Mississippi, the French pioneers had brought Guillaume Gaspard Lancroy Oegger's interpretation of Swedenborg, even though these pioneers continued to be nominal or active Roman Catholics. Oegger, a vicar of Notre Dame in Paris, received Swedenborgianism and in 1826, after studying the social theories of Saint Simon, devoted himself to the propagation of Swedenborgianism. In 1829 he published his influential exposition of Swedenborg, *Le Vrai Messie ou l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament examinés conformément aux principes du langage de la Nature*. Oegger's work was destined also for a larger influence. In 1835, Emerson read and translated part of it into his *Journal*. The Transcendental Club pondered the book and in 1842 Elizabeth Peabody published a translation of it in Boston. Its ideas, however, had already appeared in Emerson's *Nature*, published in 1836.

As time went on, New Orleans received other Europeans and began to lose its Spanish and French character. The later pioneers included a large number of Germans who, although for the most part good Lutherans, nevertheless brought with them Tafel's translation of Swedenborg's writings. Shortly, the Germans migrated north to St. Louis, which rapidly became a German city. The German migration was strong, especially between the years 1839-1848, when large numbers came to America seeking political freedom. Many of these after reaching America sought religious freedom by breaking with the Lutheran system. Some of these latter became founders of the New Church. One such group, after living in St. Louis until 1850, moved into the new state of Iowa and formed in Lenox township a communistic colony known as the Jasper colony in Iowa county.

This pioneer colony illustrates to a remarkable degree many of the Swedenborgian characteristics which made the New Church appeal to the frontiersman. It interpreted Swedenborg's social and economic teachings to mean communism which, in turn, made the colony possible. For this, too, Iowa provided in fertile soil, climate, and freedom, all that any group could ask. In its pioneer days Iowa had at one time or another practically every variety of group known to the history of social experimentation. This German New Church colony made much of the idea of freedom, not only because its members had left Germany to find freedom in the new world, but also because in both New Orleans and in St. Louis they had found Negro slavery, which to them seemed the worst of social crimes.

The first Germans to come to Missouri were Gottfried Duden and a Herr Eversmann. Both had been trained in the professions, the former in law and medicine, the latter in agriculture. Duden, after buying a large tract of prairie, settled down to write his *Berichte über eine Reise* which, being widely read in Germany, induced large numbers of his unhappy countrymen to set out for the Mississippi Valley. Among these early comers was Paul Follen, brother of Carl Follen, the well-known professor of German at Harvard. Many of the early German pioneers were graduates either of the *gymnasium* or the university, and by the rougher pioneer element were nicknamed the "Latin farmers." Most of these Latin farmers found comfort in working out utopias in which they might enjoy their books

as well as their work. Those who had studied Swedenborg, found an answer to this desire in his Christian communism.

In 1844, nine families from Bielefeld, Westphalia, reached St. Louis *via* the Gulf of Mexico and New Orleans. Shortly after, this group was joined by another group which came to St. Louis *via* the Ohio River.

The group which came to St. Louis *via* the Ohio River heard of the Swedenborgian colony at Yellow Springs, Ohio, a communistic colony, which was the outgrowth of a Swedenborg society founded in 1811 at Cincinnati. When Robert Owen visited Cincinnati in 1824, he found these Swedenborgians the only ones prepared to understand and put into practice his socialistic theories, many of which seemed closely akin to "the Heavenly teachings." A communistic Swedenborgian colony was soon formed, and in 1825 began to function. To all the pioneers who passed through the city, the New Church group in Cincinnati gave a full account of the movement. In practice, however, the communistic principle failed to live up to the ideals the New Churchmen found in its abstract principles. After a few months, the communistic feature of this colony disappeared. This by no means, however, led the Swedenborgians to give up their faith in the possibilities of unselfish co-operation. The hard life of many of the St. Louis Germans led them to believe they could succeed where the Ohio group failed.

News of other settlements in Iowa also filtered down to St. Louis. In 1835, Quakers from the Carolinas and from Tennessee had founded settlements at Salem in Henry county. Nearby was Denmark, a Congregational colony settled by New Englanders. Both these groups hated slavery; both worked together to assist Negroes to escape from Missouri. Curiously, out on the Iowa frontier the Quakers and Puritans worked together, a thing they could never have done back in New England. Together they pledged freedom for all slaves crossing the Missouri border; they built underground stations on their common underground railway and hurried slaves away to Canada. The Swedenborgians wanted to help in this. They, too, hated slavery.

In 1848, there came to St. Louis a remarkable German, Hermann Heinrich Diekhöner, who in a very short time became the intellectual and spiritual leader of the Swedenborgian Ger-

man colonists. Diekhöner was born October 14, 1796, in Bielefeld, Prussia. He early came under the same influence as Immanuel Tafel, who was born in the same year at Sulzbach. Tafel, after finishing his preparatory work, matriculated at Tübingen, where he began to translate into German the Latin writings of Swedenborg and to propagate their teachings. Diekhöner was one of the first to accept in full the "new teaching," being attracted primarily by its socialistic or, as he interpreted it, Christian communistic principles. In 1821, Tafel issued his *Prospectus*, in which he stated his purpose of translating into German Swedenborg's complete works. In 1825, however, the University of Tübingen appointed him to a professorship, with the proviso that he give up his translating. He accepted the position, but soon found that his conscience bothered him so much that in 1829 he resigned the professorship and returned to his translation, at which he continued to the end of his life. Diekhöner valiantly assisted Tafel in the work of spreading Swedenborgianism in Germany. But while Tafel's interest was theological and linguistic, Diekhöner's was political and social.

During this period, Diekhöner came under influences similar to those which later molded the thought of Karl Marx. When in 1847 Marx and Engels issued their *Manifest der Kommunisten*, Diekhöner was ready for it. Unlike Marx, however, his criticism of capitalism took the form of Christian communism as found in Swedenborg. His ideas, which he openly held, made it impossible for him to stay in Germany. Accordingly, in 1848, he left and with many other natives of Bielefeld, reached St. Louis *via* the Gulf of Mexico. As he reached America, to which many Germans at this time looked as the "land of the free," he heard that Marx had founded in Cologne the *Neue rheinische Zeitung*. This gave him only partial encouragement, for he believed that communism could never succeed without religion.

Diekhöner at once opened a cobbler's shop in part of his house and began mending shoes. His shop, however, soon became a church and a school. The kindly personality of the Swedenborgian won many Germans, whether they had come from Bielefeld or not. On Sundays he held services in his house to which large numbers came. Some of these had already become Swedenborgians in Germany, while others, dissatisfied with the Lutheran church, were ready to renounce it for the New Church which Diekhöner so persuasively taught. A few

families with no Swedenborgian leanings objected to the church tax or pew rent as it was called in St. Louis. One Sunday, so the story goes, on coming to church they found their pews locked. Leaving the church, they went to Diekhöner's shop where they straightway renounced Lutheranism.

The majority of the members of Diekhöner's "reading circles" had left Germany in 1844, but in St. Louis they had neither learned English nor had they found the utopia they had been led to expect. Most of the earlier colonists were good Lutherans, who continued to hold their membership in that church. As they learned of the New Church teaching, they, like Oegger, at first found nothing incompatible in being at the same time a member of an orthodox church and a disciple of Swedenborg. But Diekhöner, possessing scholarly insight with a theological and philosophical turn of mind, soon made his congregation see the implications of the two lines of thought. Lutheranism held fast to *sola fide*, justification by faith alone, but Swedenborg, who handled Luther roughly, declared his eternal opposition to the sufficiency of faith alone:

faith without works is dead. . . all religion has relation to life and the life of religion is to do good.

To the pioneers "works" seemed of first importance, and Diekhöner's hearers, for the most part, made the adjustment to Swedenborg. To the pioneers the theological and economic-social problems were bound together. In the new world the German pioneers had expected to find freedom for themselves and for all others. Great was their disillusionment, therefore, to find a slave market in St. Louis, and to see Negroes, whom Swedenborg had held up as the height of perfection, sold as slaves. In the growing city they also found all the characteristics of the incipient competition and the lack of personal freedom they had known in Europe. The greater part of the group became more and more convinced that Christian communism was the only cure. As a result, the St. Louis Swedenborgians resolved to go north to Iowa, where they could build a socialistic utopia free from competition, tyranny and slavery.

Another point of contact between Swedenborgianism and communistic socialism was found in Fourierism. This movement, introduced to the pioneers by Albert Brisbane's *Social Destiny of Man*, published in 1840, was held by many to be al-

most identical, so far as social aims went, with the teaching of Swedenborg. Both Fourier and Swedenborg glorified science, both emphasized co-operation in the sphere of economics, and (here was the dangerous point of resemblance) the "passional principle" taught by Fourier was identified by some with Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love*. Fourieristic phalanxes spread from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and in 1843 a phalanx emigrated from New York state to Iowa, settling on the Des Moines River, near Oskaloosa. During the two years of its existence, the members, joined by other pioneers, practiced communism. There seems to be no record as to the shades of religious belief held by these pioneers, but in general the movement was permeated with Swedenborgian teachings, as any issue of the *Harbinger* will prove. This group, although a complete failure, so far as communism was concerned, led the St. Louis New Churchmen again to believe that they might succeed where others failed.

While the St. Louis group waited, the circle in Diekhöner's shop constantly widened. Other German pioneers began to renounce Lutheranism, since it symbolized to their minds the state church of the old régime. Many of these accepted the New Church.

While plans for the colony were growing, the devastating cholera epidemic of 1848 broke out in St. Louis. The pioneers became terrified; the rapidly growing city became a partially deserted town. Fear of another epidemic hastened the plans of the group, now augmented by several new arrivals. The majority of them now accepted the *Word* as explained by Diekhöner, who had become pastor of the group. While waiting, they chose *Jaspis* as the name for the new colony, from Revelation 21:19, as given in Luther's Bible:

Und die Gründe der Mauern und der Stadt waren geschmückt mit allerlei Edelsteinen. Der erste Grund war ein Jaspis.

Descendants of the group still recall how old members used to murmur, "der schöne Name, Jaspis."

In 1842, the German migration to Iowa began in full force. In May, 1842, according to Faust,¹⁴ the newspaper records in St. Louis show that during the period from January through March more than thirty thousand pioneers passed through St.

¹⁴ Albert Bernhardt Faust, *The German Element in the United States*, I, 461.

Louis on their way to Iowa. The new government land, which was extremely fertile, the good climate, and the opportunity to "get rich" in the lead-mines near Dubuque, caused this rush of immigration. From Dubuque, many Germans pushed north into Clayton county, where in 1847 Heinrich Koch founded on the "Potato Prairie" a communistic settlement.

January 1, 1851, saw the St. Louis Swedenborgians' plans ready for the move into Iowa county, where fertile land might be bought for one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre. As soon as the weather permitted they sent out certain men chosen "to spy out the land." For this mission they sent C. O. Vette, Karl F. Naumann, and Henrich C. Kosfeld. Journeying up the Mississippi, they soon reached Keokuk and penetrated inland to Iowa county. The prairie with its black soil thrilled the "spies," who returned with glowing praise of the country from which the Indians had entirely disappeared.

As soon as the river was navigable, the pioneers piled all their goods on boats and began the ascent of the river. At the wharf at Muscatine they transferred their furniture and clothing to ox carts which they had only with the greatest difficulty been able to obtain. Thus loaded they proceeded, again with the greatest difficulty, through the tractless Iowa loess, to their destination. On April 11, 1851, a land patent was issued to William Wolbers, a trustee of the colony, calling for 120 acres in Section 18 of Township 81 North, Range 9 West, reorganized in 1855 as Lenox Township. Another purchase of 40 acres in Section 7 of the same township was made by Wolbers on April 25, and on the same date Hermann H. Diekhöner took title to 160 acres in sections 17 and 20.¹⁵

At the end of April, the colonists pitched their tents near a spring at the point where Willow Creek flows into Price Creek, a tributary of the Iowa River. From this point the land was staked out for the community, and the center of the colony seems to have been located in sections 5 and 8, although this land, according to the official records, was not purchased until the following year. Under the frontier rule, pioneers had the pre-emption right to purchase land on which improvements had

¹⁵ The record of these purchases is in the office of the County Recorder of Iowa County, Iowa. The sources for the remainder of this article are found in a large number of interviews, and in a lengthy correspondence with descendants of the Jasper Colony. This correspondence is in possession of the author.

already been made, and this seems to have been what the colony did. In 1852 the land was bought.

As soon as the land was staked out, the pioneers built log houses, five in all. Each house at first sheltered two families who shared a common kitchen and dining room. Except for the pieces brought from St. Louis, all furniture was hand-made. This caused no great difficulty, since among the members of the community were several who were skilled in carpentry and wood work. The community house, erected as soon as the log houses were completed, at first served also as church and school. Among the colonists was one man of noble birth, although among his communistic friends his title to nobility was ignored. By the end of the year 1852, the colony owned about one thousand acres, held in the name of the trustees, although some land seems at first, in spite of the communism on which the colony was based, to have remained in the possession of members of the group. Communism was not enforced. It was desired, however, especially by the leader of the group, Hermann Diekhöner, and the most ardent of the Swedenborgians.

The colony's land was extremely fertile and crops flourished, but the colonists suffered from lack of money. In their communal life, it is true, they needed none, but they could not employ barter in neighboring towns. Reports of the colony, however, soon brought others from St. Louis to augment the settlement on Price's Creek. Bernhardt Vette, a bookbinder, came, as did several young men who soon returned to St. Louis to bring their brides. Heinrich Müller, who knew English, joined the community, and acted as interpreter. The colonists read *Der Bote*, a German Swedenborgian paper published in St. Louis. All preaching as well as teaching was in German. Luther's Bible and Tafel's translation of Swedenborg's works were taught to insure the permanence of the New Church. The officers drew up for the community the following compact:

The only religion that shall exist here among us, shall be that in accordance with the doctrines of the Church of the New Jerusalem as revealed for all time through divine revelation given to the world by Emanuel Swedenborg. Only those shall be admitted to membership in this society who accept these doctrines in the governing of their lives. And any deviation from these divine teachings shall not be tolerated—against this the elders of the congregation who at all times shall be characterized by love and wisdom, shall be on guard.

This "Constitution of the First German Church of the New Jerusalem in Lenox Township, Iowa County, Iowa," was signed by the following:

Carl Friedrich Naumann, H. H. Diekhöner, Heinrich Groeth, Carl Miekel, J. H. Scheele, F. W. Diekhöner, I. Ch. Klaus, Johann Heinrich Schachtsick, Valentine Hartmann, Friedrich Schachtsick, Carl Otto Vette, Heinrich Christoph Kostfeld, F. W. Junker, Friedrich Wilhelm Diekhöner II, Hermann Schloemann, E. Heinrich Schloemann, Johann Fredr. Schlüter, Caspar Heinrich Uthoff, Friedrich Grothoff, Karl Kunz.

Although founded on the principle of communism, the plan seems never to have worked well, and in 1853 the colony, having in the meantime never been incorporated, gave up the communistic principle and divided the land among the members. Deeply disappointed, Hermann Diekhöner, the ardent disciple of the system, went back to St. Louis. When he reached home, he again opened a cobbler's shop, and preached the *Word* as expounded by Swedenborg. When an old man, he is reported to have resembled the Apostle John, telling all to love one another.

Two years later, in 1855, another German religio-communistic colony came from Buffalo, New York, and settled beside the Jasper Colony. This colony, the *Amana* or *The Society of True Inspiration*, originated in Germany in 1714. The colony bought some 26,000 acres of land, and in 1859 was incorporated under the Iowa law as the Amana Society. Ardent-ly pacifistic, the religion of the Amanas is a continuation of German pietism plus a fervent belief in the continuation of prophetic inspiration, and thoroughgoing communism.¹⁶ During the Civil War, both the Amanas and the Jasper Society kept a strictly pacifistic position. Not one member of either society went into the war as a soldier. Each society, however, worked vigorously against slavery, although not taking the extreme abolitionist position assumed by most of the Iowa Quakers. The Jasper Society drilled and prepared to defend themselves if attacked. On one occasion a rumor reached Iowa county that Sterling Price, the Confederate general, was to march through Missouri and spend the winter "in the Amanas where the fat oxen would furnish good food for his men." But Price was checked at the Battle of the Big Blue, and Iowa was not invaded.

¹⁶ On June 1, 1932, a kind of co-operative modified communism was adopted whereby the members of the colony own shares. The common kitchen and dining halls have also been replaced by the individual family kitchen and dining room.

In 1855, another communistic colony settled in Iowa: the *Icarians*, a French Fourierist group which settled near Corning, in Adams county, on a tract of land which they named Icaria. The colony was incorporated in 1860, but the second generation disliked communism and after twenty-six stormy years the entire colony ceased to exist. Communism without religion was in every case doomed to failure. It was the religious rather than the communistic element which preserved the Jasper Society.

The Jasper colony in 1859 built and dedicated the Excelsior School, replacing the old log community building as a church, and serving as the common school for the entire township. In 1880 the church building, the first Swedenborgian church in Iowa, was dedicated. The church is still standing. The members of the Jasper group became American citizens and, fiercely hating slavery, joined the Republican party. After 1880, the society became bilingual.

After Hermann Diekhöner's disappointment and return to St. Louis, Albert Schloemann became pastor of the Jasper Society; a zealous missionary, he organized "reading circles" in school houses in many places in Iowa. Schloemann was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Bussman, who continued to found reading circles until a large part of Iowa had representative groups reading Swedenborg. From 1880 to 1894 the society had two pastors, one, Rev. Stephen Wood, who preached in English for the younger generation, who began to show symptoms of waning interest. Stephen Wood, a tireless missionary and preacher, found time to write several books. The best known and most influential in Iowa were: *The Formation of Plants and Animals by an Orderly Development*; *The New Philosophy Applied to the Solar System*; and *The New Philosophy in Connection with the Science of Correspondence*. Of later pastors, the Rev. J. B. Parmlee and the Rev. William Martin may be mentioned. The latter became intensely interested in Swedenborg's interpretation of communism. In 1900, Martin began the publication of *The Echo*, the only Swedenborgian paper ever to be published in Iowa. By means of this organ, Martin sought to instil new life into both the German and English Swedenborgians of Iowa. From the first, the paper took a radical social position, reprinting articles and sermons from *The Public*, a single tax paper published in St. Louis. It carried expositions of socialism, exhorted all Iowans to read the writ-

ings of Henry James, Sr., and stressed the importance of books giving the pure Swedenborgian point of view.

About 1900, the Swedenborgian church, in the Iowa county colony, began to lose its strength. Two reasons seem uppermost: the German speaking members had died, and for the most part, the younger generation had no desire to speak German or to read the works of Swedenborg. Another reason was the interest which their pastor, the Rev. J. B. Parmlee, showed in the Koreshites. This communistic-religious community, founded by Dr. Cyrus R. Teed, who claimed to be a reincarnation of the Messiah, finally settled at Estero, Florida, where it erected a great temple to be the center of the "New Jerusalem." But the Jasper Society in 1900 had no interest in communism and little in any New Jerusalem outside its own rural community. Mr. Parmlee stayed as part time pastor till 1910, from which time the Jasper Society has not had a resident pastor. The "reading circles" by this time also had died out, other activities, mostly of a non-religious character, taking their place.

By 1900, the frontier had entirely vanished. English had become the universal language, the elements of Darwinism had filtered into the schools, together with other scientific theories, and few cared about defending the Bible against them. The hardships of the pioneer days had gradually disappeared, slavery was a forgotten issue, the temperance question was gradually being solved by education, capitalism had caught the acquisitive instinct. All seemed fairly right with the world. After three years, *The Echo*, which William Martin so ardently sought to induce Iowans to read, was suspended for want of subscribers. In 1900, with the frontier forgotten, nobody seemed interested any longer in problems. Instead, the farmers of the Jasper Society added land to land and building to building, quite oblivious to the situation which had in its bosom the making of the World War. In fourteen years their peaceful slumber ended. Again confusion came upon them as they were taught to hate the Fatherland to which in reality they had the loosest ties. Perhaps once more out of the present social chaos, the writings of Swedenborg shall be revived.