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by Marsha Keith Schuchard

Blake's attitude toward Swedenborg and his devotees has long been the subject of controversy among critics. That Blake and his family were Swedenborgians was once accepted as given fact, then rejected as mythology, and subsequently resurrected as a real possibility.¹ However, most commentators have relied too heavily on Robert Hindmarsh's *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church*, published posthumously in London in 1861. Few have realized that Hindmarsh deliberately slanted the history to maximize his own role and to serve a counter-revolutionary political agenda.² Like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, Hindmarsh labored to cover up his own early revolutionary leanings and to distance himself and the New Church from charges of subversive "illuminism." By omitting or distorting the dominant role of foreign Freemasons in organizing the New Jerusalem Temple in London, Hindmarsh created a conservative, prudish, and inaccurate version of eighteenth-century Swedenborgianism that fit comfortably into a Victorian milieu. Though Blake fit most uncomfortably into Hindmarsh's context, the visionary artist and radical prophet found a congenial—even inspirational—milieu among the Masonic *Illuminés* who were the driving force behind the Swedenborgian movement.

To bring to the surface these underground *Illuminés* of the 1780s, it is necessary to dig back to their roots in an older clandestine world of international Jacobite-Masonic intrigue. However, it is difficult to penetrate the network of "irregular" Freemasonry in England, because of the oath-bound vows of secrecy and political risks incurred by members of foreign-affiliated lodges. These dangers reached their peak during the recurrent Jacobite agitations after the 1745 rebel-



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lion, the revolt of the American colonies in 1776, and the French invasion scare of 1798.³ At each of these periods, Freemasonry was deeply polarized into revolutionary and loyalist factions (called generically the "Ancients" versus the "Moderns"), and governmental crackdowns on the former led to destruction of records, surveillance of members, and closure of lodges.

From the time when Emanuel Swedenborg first visited London in 1710-13, his activities were shrouded in deliberate obscurity and encoded documents, for he participated in the Franco-Swedish-Jacobite conspiracies that gave the Hanoverian kings of England nightmares throughout his lifetime.⁴ Returning many times to London between 1744 and 1772, Swedenborg acted as a secret agent for the French king and the pro-French party in Sweden, known as the "Hats."⁵ In fact, Louis XV personally subsidized the anonymous publication of Swedenborg's theosophical writings in Lon-

don as a cover for his espionage activities. To serve both his political agenda and his theosophical ambitions, Swedenborg utilized a network of Masonic lodges in England and Sweden that were linked with sister lodges in France, Holland, Germany, Poland, and Russia. By the time of his death in March 1772, these "illuminated" Masons were laying the foundations of the Swedenborgian Theosophical Society that Blake joined in the 1780s.

The Swedish lodges of Blake's day claimed to possess precious documents that contained the Masonic secrets embedded in "the hieroglyphic language of the old Jewish wisdom books."⁶ Some of these documents were obtained by Swedenborg from Jewish and French Masons in London.⁷ During his visits to the city, Swedenborg often resided in the Queen's Arms Tavern in Wellclose Square, which hosted a French-affiliated lodge that welcomed Jewish Masons. His immediate neighbor in the square was Dr. Samuel Jacob Falk, a Jewish alchemist and Cabalist, who became revered and feared as one of the "Unknown Superiors" of illuminist Masonry.⁸ Secretly associated with the radical Sabbatians of Poland and with French agents of the Stuart cause, Falk instructed Swedenborg in Cabalistic trance techniques and sexual magic, which they believed would usher in a spiritual and political millennium.

Both Falk and Swedenborg were associated with the "Rite of Seven Degrees," a shadowy Masonic order directed by Pierre Lambert de Lintot (a former French military officer, Jacobite agent, and talented engraver), who initiated many visitors to London.⁹ Anglicizing his name as Peter Lambert, the artist infused Swedenborgian themes into the mystical high degrees. He also produced a series of complex,

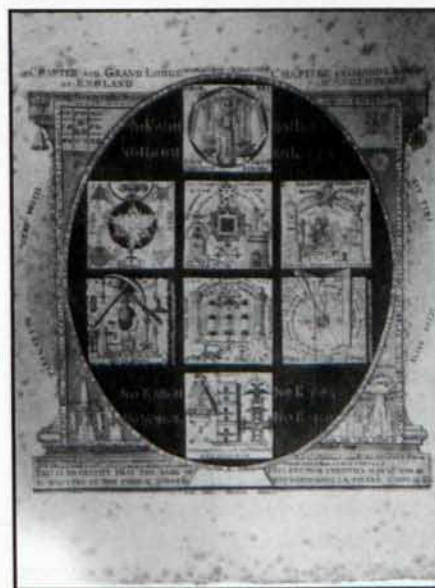
hieroglyphical engravings that were widely sought by European Masons who believed they contained the key to the Cabalistic arcana possessed by Falk and Swedenborg.¹⁰ That the ritual term "Los" was an important symbol in these degrees provides a new perspective on Blake's own symbolic figure of "Los" in his illuminist prophecies of the 1790s.

Swedenborg successfully maintained his *incognito* in London until the 1760s, when he began to receive many Masonic admirers. In 1769 he was visited by a group of alchemists—the chemist Peter Woulfe, the musician Michael Arne, and the bankrupt Robert Peacock—who discussed Hermetic philosophy with him.¹¹ Receiving an unflattering report about this discussion from Peacock, the French physician Benedict Chastanier decided not to call on Swedenborg and, instead, pursued his own independent Masonic initiatives. Chastanier had become a high-ranking Mason in France, and he was fascinated by Swedenborg's anonymous writings. In 1767 he established a lodge of *Illuminés Théosophes* in London; though the rituals drew on Swedenborgian symbolism, Chastanier did not know the identity of the author of his source texts.¹² Soon after this, the Marquis de Thomé (who had met Swedenborg in Paris in 1769) began to assist his *frère* J. P. Moët (a royal librarian) in translating Swedenborg's works into French, and he established a special Swedenborgian rite in Paris by 1773.¹³

Three years later, Chastanier learned that Swedenborg was the author of the books he so cherished, and he determined to establish a Masonic society that would publish and disseminate the master's writings. Joining with those Masons who shared his devotion, Chastanier formed in 1776 the "London Universal Society for the Promotion of the New Jerusalem Church."¹⁴ Maintaining a low profile because of the current government crackdown on "irregular" and Ancient lodges, the Universal Society apparently included Peter Woulfe, Michael Arne, General

Charles Rainsford, Lord Percy, Reverend Thomas Hartley, Dr. Husband Messiter, Dr. William Spence, Edward Maubach, Francis Barthelemon, and Henry Servanté. The artists Richard Cosway and Phillipe Jacques de Louthembourg, who were early admirers of Swedenborg and interested in Masonry, may also have supported the Universalists.¹⁵

Chastanier and Thomé joined forces with an ambitious lodge of occult research, the *Philalèthes*, which was launched in Paris in 1775 and which investigated the theosophical claims of Falk, Swedenborg, and other *gurus* of illuminism.¹⁶ Thomé evidently met Falk in Paris or London, for in December 1777 he described to a visiting rabbi his earlier studies in Cabala under the *Baal-Shem*.¹⁷ In winter 1776-77 the Duke of Chartres (Grand Master of the Grand Orient system of French Masonry) traveled to London where he sought out Falk, who consecrated a talismanic ring that would ensure the Duke's accession to the French throne.¹⁸ In the early days of the Rite of Seven Degrees, Chartres was cited by Lambert as his Deputy Grand Master.¹⁹ Chartres later became the Duke of Orleans and then *Phillipe Égalité*, an intimate friend of Richard Cosway and a hero to William Blake.²⁰



It was probably at this time (1777-79) that Chastanier began to collaborate with Lambert, who had moved next door to him on Tottenham Court Road and who corresponded with members of the Swedish Rite abroad.²¹ Lambert exhibited pictures at the Society of Artists and Free Society of Artists, and his highly finished, complex engravings may have become known to those artists who were interested in Swedenborg and mystical Masonry (such as Louthembourg, Cosway, Sharp, and—possibly—Blake). General Rainsford, who was friendly with Louthembourg and Cosway, participated in the Universal Society and Rite of Seven Degrees, and he later inherited the Masonic engravings, manuscripts, and regalia of Lambert.²² The similarity of many themes and symbols in Lambert's and Blake's engravings is provocative.

In 1777 the Universalists were visited by Charles Bernhard Wadström, a Swedish Mason who was undertaking a secret mission of industrial espionage for King Gustav III, and who returned with news of the Swedenborgian publishing enterprise in London.²³ He also told his friend Augustus Nordenskjöld about Dr. Mordecai Gumpel Levison, a remarkable Jewish physician in London, who practiced alchemy and was a Swedenborgian Mason.²⁴ Determined to collaborate with Dr. Levison, Nordenskjöld traveled to London in 1779, where he moved into the Jew's residence in Soho Square (nearby Rainsford's home in the square). In December Nordenskjöld and Levison began printing *A Plain System of Alchymy*, which combined Swedenborgian metaphysics with practical chemistry. They interrupted the printing when they decided to travel to Stockholm in order to solicit the sponsorship of Gustav III for their alchemical endeavors.²⁵ At this time, a "Mrs. Levison" was a subscriber to the *Discourses on Various Subjects* (1779), written by the Reverend Jacob Duché, a Swedenborgian whose work also attracted William Blake and other artists.²⁶ It was in Duché's home at the Lambeth Asylum

that the Universalists often met in the 1780s.²⁷

By 1778 the Swedenborgians in London and Stockholm were corresponding with kindred souls in Berlin, where the Abbé Antoine Joseph Pernety and Count Thaddeus Grabianka led a Masonic lodge of *Illuminés* who studied the master's works, while carrying out alchemical and Cabalistic experiments.²⁸ In April 1782 the unexpected death of Dr. Falk upset an international Masonic project undertaken by Falk, Rainsford, and the *Philalèthes*.²⁹ It was perhaps this development that influenced Rainsford and Chastanier to publish a brochure that sought new members for the Universal Society—the *Plan général d'une Société Universelle* (London: R. Hawes, 1782). The work was sold at the London bookshop of John Denis, who attended Lambert's lodge and who acted as agent for Swedenborgian publications.³⁰ Chastanier appealed to high-degree Masons to join their Swedenborgian rite:

Afin de favoriser l'Élite des Alchimistes, des Cabalistes, des Francs-Maçons, et, en un mot, de tous les Savans occultes, qui, quoi qu'en pensent ceux qui ignorent la nature de leurs travaux, doivent nécessairement avoir leur utilité particulière dans un système Universel, ces Savans tiendront quand et comme ils le jugeront à propos des Assemblées secrètes, où les Membres d'une autre espèce ne pourront être introduite sous aucun prétexte. La Société aura pour objet de concilier toutes les Doctrines, et même tous les intérêts, en employant sans cesse tous ses talents et tous ses pouvoirs, au bonheur de toute la Terre en général, et du Pays où elle s'établira en particulier.

On institutera différens Grades suivant les différens degrés de la Science; lesquels degrés seront formés d'après ceux qui existent dans la forme humaine, mesure et raison de toutes choses.

Chaque grade sera marqué par des ordres distinctifs, significatifs, ou symboliques, pris dans la Science des analogies ou correspondances.

Il sera libre à chaque Membre, de porter son grade dans le monde comme un marque d'honneur; mais dans la Société chacun sera constamment obligé de s'en décorer, comme d'un signe qui le rappelle à sa place et à sa fonction particulières. . .³¹



Chastanier appealed especially to artists to join the society of Universalists, for they would study the symbolic arts in their highest expression. By January 1783, according to a Swedish journal, various artists had joined this Swedenborgian society in London.³²

Within three months, Chastanier was encouraged enough by the expansion of Illuminism in lodges abroad that he once again went public in his quest for new members. On 1 April 1783 he placed an ad in the *Courier de l'Europe: Gazette Anglo-Française*, which was published on Great Queen Street and which had a large English and Continental readership.³³ He clearly linked the Swedenborg society in London with its affiliated societies abroad, which were actually the illuminist lodges at Stockholm, Paris, Avignon, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. Despite Hindmarsh's later claim that he placed the first ad and convened the first public meeting of Swedenborgians in London in December 1784, Chastanier actually earned the honor.³⁴ But Hindmarsh, who was a Freemason in his younger days, was later determined

(in the post-Napoleonic era) to cover up the Masonic nature of these first meetings.³⁵

In late fall 1783 Charles Frederick Nordenskjöld (brother of Augustus the alchemist) arrived in London, where he joined the Universalists and gave them some of Swedenborg's manuscripts. In Nordenskjöld's voluminous journals and letters covering his experiences over the next three years, a valuable new perspective emerges on the subsequent development of the Swedenborg society in London.³⁶ Nordenskjöld listed many names that Hindmarsh suppressed (including "Mr. Cosway, Painter in History"), and he amusingly recounted the occult enthusiasm and political radicalism of most of the members.³⁷ To help Chastanier's publishing efforts, Nordenskjöld donated the proceeds from his Masonic publication, *Oneiromantien* (Stockholm, 1783), which was based on Swedenborg's unpublished Italian journal of alchemical symbolism and dream interpretation.

After the printer Hindmarsh joined the society, a decision was made to form a



more public organization—the “Theosophical Society”—which would function as the publishing arm of the secret Universal Society. The two societies still collaborated, with Hindmarsh and Chastanier serving as co-secretaries (the latter handling the foreign correspondence). That the early members of the Theosophical Society shared the ecumenical spirit of the *Illuminés* is suggested by a statement in their published manifesto:

We wage war with none, but are determined to maintain peace and friendship with all; and being sensible that without variety, in religion as well as other concerns, there cannot exist harmony or true order, we allow all men the free exercise of their respective modes of worship, according to their different persuasions and habits of education; and wish nothing more than to renounce every appearance of a sectarian spirit.³⁸

Earlier in 1783 Chastanier had traveled to Paris, where he visited the Marquis de Thomé and informed him about the Universal Society. Thomé became so enthusiastic that he visited the group in London in early 1784 and held forth on his plans to launch a Swedenborgian balloon expedition to Africa. According to Nordenskjöld, Thomé “thinks it will be the second Noah’s Ark, which shall save the faithful from the frightful desolation which is to overcome the whole of Europe.”³⁹ While Thomé expounded his fantasy

of liberating the enslaved Africans via balloon, another ardent abolitionist visited the Universal Society. James Glen was a Scottish-born planter from Demerara, who became a strong supporter of the Universalist agenda. Glen arranged for Hindmarsh to ship a collection of the society’s publications to the United States and then undertook a Swedenborgian-Masonic mission to the new world. In June-July 1784, Glen lectured in Philadelphia and Boston on “the extraordinary SCIENCE of Celestial and Terrestrial Connections and Correspondencies, recently revived, by the late and Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg”:

The sublime Science teaches us from every Object in the World of Nature to learn things Spiritual and Heavenly; it is the most ancient and excellent of all Sciences, being that whereby the Holy Scriptures were written; according to which the highest Angels form their Ideas, and through the medium of which the earliest of the Human Race held Converse and Communion with these blessed Beings. The Knowledge of this useful Science has for many Ages been lost to the World. The Egyptian Hieroglyphics, the Greek and Roman Mythology, and the Modern Freemasonry being the last remnants of it. The honourable Emanuel Swedenborg, the wonderful Restorer of this long lost Secret . . . was thus taught this Science of Heaven.⁴⁰

In his lectures, Glen included discourses on Jewish manners and customs, hieroglyphics, and Freemasonry. Glen took advantage of the famous Masonic history of the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston (where many Scottish-Rite Masons gathered to plan the Boston Tea Party) to recruit members to the Swedenborgian cause.⁴¹

On 2 June Nordenskjöld expressed his hope that the wealthier members of the Universal Society, such as Rainsford and Lord Percy, would draw in more high-ranking members, and he vowed to translate Chastanier’s *Plan* into Swedish.⁴² From Nordenskjöld’s notes and list of devotees of Swedenborg, it is clear that the Universal Society had more eclectic occult interests than the Theosophical Society, which maintained a more limited publishing agenda. On 14 June Edward Maubach,

a radical writer who had recently returned from Paris, notified Rainsford that Savalette de Langes, chief of the *Philalèthes*, was pleased with the information he had received from the Universal Society and asked for more copies of the *Plan*, for many French Masons were “très jalouse” to become corresponding members.⁴³ Maubach wanted to re-publish the *Plan* in French and English, to advertise it in Maty’s *New Review*, and to publicize the fact that many “personnes de sang et merite” were interested in the Masonic project.

Rainsford and his friend William Bousie, an Anglo-French merchant, had been corresponding with the *Philalèthes* since summer 1783.⁴⁴ The Parisian lodge was laying the groundwork for an international Masonic convention to investigate all the different high-degree systems. During the sessions from August 1784 through June 1787, the Swedenborgian *Illuminés* in London participated in person and by correspondence.⁴⁵ Rainsford provided valuable information on Swedenborg, Falk, and the Cabalistic symbolism of the high degrees, while Chastanier was praised for his Swedenborgian publication efforts. Rainsford and Woulfe were also members of *Der Pilger* lodge in London, which worked in German and practiced the Swedish Rite, and they worked with several foreign members to present information on the Swedish high degrees. However, the material was partially censored because of Sweden’s stringent requirements of secrecy. Based on Chastanier’s letters and their own investigations, the *Philalèthes* concluded on 29 March 1787:

Du tout il résulte qu’il existe depuis longtemps, en Suède et à Londres, et en d’autres villes de l’Europe, des sociétés fraternelles, réunies pour la propagation de la doctrine de Swedenborg; que, concurrement à l’établissement de ces sociétés, il s’en était formé dans le nord de l’Europe, qui, dirigées par divers moyens, avaient pour but et objet des sciences religieuses, mais analogues au *Christ* . . .⁴⁶

In the meantime in London, however, the relationship between the Universal and Theosophical Societies was

becoming strained, as certain of the more provincial, lower-class British members became resentful at the more international, upper-class participants. In August 1785 the Marquis de Thomé returned to London, where he urged the implementation of Chastanier's ambitious publishing plans. The Frenchman's elegance and *esprit* delighted Duché, Nordenskjöld, Rainsford, and many members, but his "foreign" interference offended others. Thomé insisted that the publishing society change its name from "Theosophic" to "Philanthropic" because the first word connoted paganism. Though a majority accepted his reasoning, some of the British members insisted on the more localized name of the "British Society for the Propagation of the Doctrines of the New Church."⁴⁷

A discouraged Chastanier wrote Rainsford about the personality clashes and feuding that plagued the attempted cooperation of the two societies, but he soldiered on in his ecumenical efforts. Though "la Société de ceux qui se disent Swedenborgites ou Swedenborgiens" rejected his proposal to publish Swedenborg's Latin manuscript of *Apocalypsis Explicata*, they agreed to bring out two English translations of smaller works.⁴⁸ Despite the "British" name change, however, Nordenskjöld continued to use the term Philanthropic; when he founded the "Exegetic and Philanthropic Society" in Stockholm in 1786, he claimed that it was a copy of the London society. Though the public Exegetic society did not call itself a Masonic lodge, all the members were Masons and they planned to share a printing press and publishing agenda with the Masons.⁴⁹ This apparently mirrored the arrangement in London between the public Theosophical and secret Universal societies.

By 1786 the revolutionary developments in France added to the unease of the more conservative British Swedenborgians. During that year, when the Diamond Necklace Trial rocked the throne of France, two leaders of



radical Masonry—Cagliostro and Grabianka—arrived in London and sought recruits among the Swedenborgians.⁵⁰ Cagliostro, who knew Dr. Levison, merged the teachings of Swedenborg and Falk into his Egyptian Rite.⁵¹ Similarly, Grabianka merged those of Swedenborg and "a rich Cabalon Philosopher" into his Illuminist Rite.⁵² When Hindmarsh wrote his history of this period, he never mentioned Cagliostro, who won over many disciples, and he downplayed Grabianka, who won over Hindmarsh. Moreover, Hindmarsh later covered up the Masonic goal of Grabianka's recruitment in London, and he falsely claimed that the London society soon broke its ties with the *Illuminés* of Avignon.⁵³

Chastanier was initially enthusiastic about the link-up between London and Avignon, and he determined to recruit Masons from rival lodges to the Swedenborgian agenda. When he learned that the Swedenborgians in Stockholm had founded a special Masonic lodge in 1787, to circumvent clerical opposition to the Exegetic society, he utilized his newly launched *Journal Novi-Jerusalemite* to praise the new Swedish lodge.⁵⁴ It would serve the good of humanity if the whole earth became covered with such lodges. He also urged those Masons who did not belong to the *Philalèthes* to study Swedenborg

as they searched for the true secrets of the fraternity:

Maçons francs et libres, dont j'ai l'honneur d'être frère, votre société respectable est faite pour être leur émule. Vous cherchez maintenant plus que jamais la vérité, témoins les lettres circulaires que le Grand-Orient de Paris fait partout distribuer. Voici qu'elle se présente à vous. Ce sont les oeuvres de Swédenborg qui vous la dévoilant dans tous ses emblèmes, symboles et figures que vous ne connaissiez encore que superficiellement. Ne ferez-vous rien en pénétrer l'intérieur? Il est de votre intérêt de concourir à la réussite de mon plan . . .⁵⁵

Chastanier's journal, which targeted Masons of differing rites, continued throughout 1787-88, as he appealed to British lodges to admit women and to all lodges to support the revolutionary changes in France. He also made clear that the *Bureau Typographique de la Nouvelle Église*, which published the journal in London, was a Masonic society composed of "Amateurs de la Vérité" who were "Très secrets Associés du dit Bureau."⁵⁶

However, the visits of Cagliostro and Grabianka—foreign prophets of revolution—brought an unwelcome public spotlight on the Swedenborgians. Reinforced by personal antagonisms and class resentments, the political polarization erupted into battles between the Universalists and the Separatists.⁵⁷ The latter group—a small minority of the Swedenborgians—hired a chapel at Great Eastcheap where they planned to establish a separate public church dedicated to a sectarian religion of Swedenborgianism. The Universalists argued instead that members should remain affiliated with their original churches while studying Swedenborg and other theosophers in private homes and secret lodge meetings.⁵⁸ Initially, many of the Universalists tried to participate in the Eastcheap meetings and, though Hindmarsh did not mention them, the names of Grabianka and Thomé were successfully proposed for membership on 7 May 1787.⁵⁹ On 3 September William Bousie was nominated, but he was rejected by a vote of

12 to 1, perhaps because of his linkage with Cagliostro.

In May 1788 Chastanier also rejected the influence of Cagliostro and warned about "ces grand Instituteurs de ces prétendues Loges Égyptiennes."⁶⁰ He worried that Cagliostro's disciples in London tried to cure diseases by the Cabalistic pronouncement of the name of Jehovah. Though he targeted his publications at the Masons, the ecumenical Chastanier still hoped to cooperate with the sectarians. Thus, in May he also published a charitable view of the congregation at the Eastcheap Chapel:

Nous avons assisté à leur Culte, et nous y avons observé . . . le plus grand recueillement et la plus grande dévotion; il nous a même paru que le nombreux auditoire de gens simples qui composaient l'assemblée étoit intimement pénétré des grandes vérités qu'on lui développoit. Au reste ceux qui reprochent à cette branche des amateurs de la Nouvelle dispensation d'avoir été contre l'intention de Swedenborg, en formant une secte . . . doivent encore réfléchir que tout est progressif au spirituel comme au naturel . . .⁶¹

The Eastcheap minutes reveal the continuing arguments about priestcraft and expulsions for "irregularity," but by December 1788 Chastanier was allowed to join. With Augustus Nordenskjöld, Charles Wadström, and their English supporter J. A. Tulk also attending meetings, it seemed that a cooperative relationship might be revived.

The in-fighting was still confined to a small number, so most admirers of Swedenborg (who were on the list of 500 readers invited in December 1788 to the Great Eastcheap Conference) were not aware of the controversies. Nordenskjöld, Chastanier, and Wadström managed to influence the final manifesto of the Conference, so that it represented a patched-together compromise. Thus, when William and Catherine Blake signed the minute book in April 1789, they did not necessarily take sides in the controversies. James Glen, who had returned from his Masonic mission to America, also signed the official statement, and he



did not foresee then that Hindmarsh would eventually become "a pronounced ecclesiastic" and a "Bishop of Babylon."⁶² Soon after the Conference, however, two new issues erupted that would polarize the members over the next few months (and which Hindmarsh would later try to conceal). Both were triggered by Nordenskjöld's radical views of sexuality and alchemy, which were based on his accurate and intimate knowledge of Swedenborg's real theories.

In Swedenborg's unpublished diaries and in the Latin edition of *Conjugal Love*, he revealed with unusual explicitness the breathing and meditation techniques of Yogic-Cabalism that could produce a prolonged erection and state of orgasmic trance.⁶³ Because this visionary sexual technique was crucial to the achievement of "spiritual influx," Swedenborg worked out a radical theory of marriage and concubinage to ensure that all *Illuminés* had access to this key to spiritual vision. Nordenskjöld based his plans for African colonization and community organization on the central premise of prolonged "Virile Potency."⁶⁴ In May he presented his thesis with such enthusiasm that even the young Hindmarsh agreed with him, but the "concubine" promoters were subsequently expelled by more conservative members. The minutes were subsequently ripped out, and an older Hindmarsh

never mentioned the affair in his history.⁶⁵

Though the sexual visionaries may have been temporarily expelled from Eastcheap, Nordenskjöld had another plan which must have appealed to the many Hermetic students among the Conference participants. On 26 May he issued a broadside manifesto to "the True Members of the New Jerusalem Church," who "sincerely wish to separate themselves both internally and externally from the Old Church"⁶⁶ (see appendix). This remarkable document, which has never been mentioned in New Church histories or Blake studies, presents the Swedenborgian alchemical views that he and Dr. Levison first promulgated in 1779, and which Nordenskjöld had now perfected. As a genuinely talented chemist and metallurgist, Nordenskjöld was experienced in the practical techniques of alchemy, and he invited any interested Swedenborgians to help him set up a lab and furnace (Athanor) in order to pursue the great work. At the same time, the alchemist would undergo spiritual regeneration, which would render "the Day of his Tabernacling in the Body a continual State of Bliss." Any profits from the production of gold and the universal medicine would be consecrated to the use of the New Jerusalem Church. The broadside was sent as a circular letter "to the friends of the New Church only," but it was "particularly requested, that the Contents of this Letter be not made public; and that all Answers be directed to me at Mr. Robert Hindmarsh's . . . 32, Clerkenwell-Close."

That Blake probably received Nordenskjöld's proposal is provocative, given the artist's subsequent use of alchemical symbolism and preoccupation with the furnace of Los. Moreover, Lambert de Lintot was perhaps inspired by Nordenskjöld and the Universalists in 1789 to issue new Masonic engravings with Swedenborgian and alchemical themes. In one striking plate, there is a circular emblem in which three human legs emerge from a shared genital area. The circle

is ringed by the motto "UNA TRINUS AB UNO" at the top and "DE LOS" at the bottom, with a crown and sun relating to the respective phrases.⁶⁷ In his circular letter, Nordenskjöld pointed out that "the fundamental error in theology has been 'the setting up a Trinity of Persons, instead of a Trinity in One Person'; similarly, the fundamental error in Alchemy consisted in adopting the 'Trinity or Three-fold Principle of Matters instead of a Trinity or Three-fold Principle in the Matter.'" For Swedenborg and Nordenskjöld, the sexual dynamics between the male and female potencies created the "trine" equilibrium or androgynous unity. As Lambert appealed to illuminated Masons to help place the "First & Last Stone of the Jerusalem Church" and engraved on a pedestal "How have I found it/ By work and Experience/ SOL'S," the possibility that Blake had access to this secretive illuminist undertaking takes on plausibility.

The subsequent history of the Universal Society and Swedenborgian Masonry in London remains difficult to piece together. Evidence of the polarizations over political and theosophical issues survives in the rival Swedenborgian journals published in the 1790s, in the manuscripts of Duché and Rainsford, and in a plethora of pamphlets and memoirs published by the participants.⁶⁸ In the wake of the 1794 treason trials, which threw a frightening light on those Swedenborgians who worked for the London Corresponding Society, the *Illuminés* found themselves in a dangerous position. The intensifying crackdown on radical Masonry culminated in the Secret Societies Act of 1799, which rendered all "irregular" lodges illegal and treasonous. Subsequently, the widespread destruction of documents by the increasingly secretive *Illuminés* and the counter-revolutionary coverup by the conservatives means that the Swedenborgian underworld remains largely buried.

However, it is crucial when reading Blake's allusions, both favorable and unfavorable to Swedenborg and the



Swedenborgians, to recognize that he was responding to controversies and arguments that inspired or distressed many of his associates. The issue was not so much his response to Swedenborg—whom he accepted as a great though flawed prophet, a *confrère* of Paracelsus and Boehme—but his responses to the warring factions and eclectic opinions among the motley crew of Swedenborgians. Though Blake scorned the prudish "angels" of the Eastcheap Society, he would have found ready sympathizers for his illuminated prophecies among the illuminist "devils" of the Universal Society.



¹ See Morton Paley, "A New Heaven is Begun": William Blake and Swedenborgianism," *Blake* 12 (1979): 64-90, for a summary of opinion until 1979 and for important source material on the Swedish context of events in England; also, Christopher Heppner, "Blake's 'New Jerusalem Descending': a Drawing (Butlin #92) Identified," *Blake* 20 (1986): 4-11.

² Paley (87n8) warned that "Hindmarsh was not a disinterested party as concerns the schisms within the New Jerusalem Church." James Hyde, the able New Church historian, also warned that the standard biography of Hindmarsh by Carl Odhner could not be trusted: "it shows no sense of proportion, no historic perspective; it magnifies the insignificant, and belittles the worthy; it paints the subject's errors as his great achievements"; see "Some Notes Respecting Robert Hindmarsh," *New Church Magazine* 24 (1905): 114-23.

³ The standard but deficient histories of eighteenth-century Freemasonry in England are Robert F. Gould, *The History of Freemasonry* (New York: John C. Yorston, 1885), and Bernard Fay, *Revolution and Freemasonry, 1680-1800* (Boston: Little Brown, 1935); for a recent corrective view, see Paul Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) 300-05.

⁴ See my "Swedenborg, Jacobitism, and Freemasonry," in *Swedenborg and His Influence*, ed. Erland Brock (Bryn Athyn: Academy of New Church, 1988) 359-79; on Sweden's prolonged support of the Jacobites, see Claude Nordmann, *Grandeur et Liberté de la Suède* (Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1971).

⁵ See F. G. Lindh, "Swedenborgs Ekonomi," *Nya Kyrkans Tidning* (1929): 85-91, 112-18; and my "Yeats and the Unknown Superiors: Swedenborg, Falk, and Cagliostro," in *Secret Texts*, eds. Marie Roberts and Hugh Ormsby-Lennon (New York: AMS, in press).

⁶ In-Ho Lee Ryu, "Freemasonry Under Catherine the Great: a Reinterpretation" (Harvard University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1967) 136, 145-59.

⁷ Detailed documentation on Swedenborg's Masonic activities and Cabalistic contacts will be given in my *Emanuel, the Desire of Nations: Swedenborg, Jacobitism, and Freemasonry* (forthcoming).

⁸ Hermann Adler, "The Baal Shem of London," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (1908) 148-73.

⁹ W. Wonnacott, "The Rite of Seven Degrees in London," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* [AQC] 39 (1926): 63-98; George Draffen, "Some Further Notes on the Rite of Seven Degrees in London," *AQC* 68 (1956): 94-110; *Livre des délibérations*

de la loge de l'Union, #70 (c. 1772-90), Ms. BE 166 Uni, in Grand Lodge Library, London.

¹⁰ Erich Lindner, *The Royal Art Illustrated*, trans. Arthur Lindsay (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1976) 136-46.

¹¹ Benedict Chastanier, *A Word of Advice to a Benighted World* (London, 1795); rare copy in Royal Library, Stockholm.

¹² Alain Le Bihan, *Francs-Maçons et Ateliers Parisiens de la Grand Loge de France au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1973) 53-239; Carl Lenning, *Encyclopädie der Freimaurerei* (Leipzig, 1822) 2: 448-49.

¹³ Le Bihan 239, 285-86; Alice Joly, "La 'Sainte Parole' des Illuminés d'Avignon," *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 2-4 (1960): 103; Antoine Faivre, "Un familier des sociétés esotériques: Bourée de Corberon," *Revue des sciences humaines*, n.s. (January-March 1967): 260.

¹⁴ James Hyde, "Benedict Chastanier and the Illuminati of Avignon," *New-Church Review* 14 (1907): 181-205.

¹⁵ See my "Yeats"; also, "Blake's 'Mr. Femality': Freemasonry, Espionage, and the Double-Sex'd," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 122 (1992).

¹⁶ J. E. S. Tuckett, "Savalette de Langes, Les Philalèthes, and the Convent of Wilhelmshausen, 1782," *AQC* (1917): 131-71; series of articles in *Le Monde Maçonnique*, 14-15 (1873-74).

¹⁷ Elkan Adler, *Jewish Travellers* (London, 1930) 357-59.

¹⁸ Charles Henri, Baron von Gleichen, *Souvenirs* (London: Leon Techener, 1868) 176. Gleichen was a Philalèthe.

¹⁹ Wonnacott 71-76. In 1764-72, Lintot claimed affiliation with French Grand Masters (Prince of Clermont and Duke of Chartres) under the international Grand Mastership of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. In 1774 he transferred the Rite's allegiance to Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, disaffected brother of George III.

²⁰ Hubert La Marle, *Phillipe Égalité: Grand Maître de la Revolution* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1989); Stephen Lloyd, "Richard Cosway, RA: the Artist as Collector, Connoisseur, and Virtuoso," *Apollo* (June 1991): 399-400; William Blake, *The French Revolution* (1791) 10.

²¹ They lived at #62 and #64, respectively; see Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain* (London, 1907; facs. rpt. Bath: Kingsmead, 1969) 142-43.

²² Gordon Hills, "Notes on the Rainsford Papers in the British Museum," *AQC* 26 (1913): 93-129. Lindner reproduced some of the engravings held by a lodge in Bamberg, Germany, and Freemasons' Hall, London; the latter possesses additional engravings and manuscripts by Lambert.



²³ See the sources on Wadström and the Nordenskjöld in Paley, 84-85n98; also, Hills 111.

²⁴ Gösta Bodman, "August Norden-skiöld, en Gustav III:s alkemist," and Hans J. Schoeps, "Lakaren och Alkemisten Gumpertz Levison," in *Lychnos* (1943): 189-229, 230-48; A. E. Arppe, *Anteckningar om Finsk Alkemister* (Helsingfors: Finska Vetenskaps Societen, 1870) 1-110.

²⁵ Copy of the printed fragment in Royal Library, Stockholm.

²⁶ In the second London edition (1780), Duché included Mrs. Levison among subscribers omitted from the first edition. That she was the wife of Dr. Levison, the Jewish Swedenborgian, is suggested by the additional Jewish subscribers, Dr. de la Cour and Naphtali Hart Mier (sic), who were Freemasons and friends of Dr. Falk.

²⁷ Clarke Garrett, "The Spiritual Odyssey of Jacob Duché," *Proceedings of American Philosophical Society* 119 (1975): 143-55; and, "Swedenborg and the Mystical Enlightenment in Late Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of History of Ideas* 45 (1984): 67-81.

²⁸ Micheline Meillassoux, *Dom Pernety (1716-1796) et les Illuminés d'Avignon* (Milan and Paris: Editions Arché, 1992).

²⁹ Hills 105; see Schuchard, "Yeats."

³⁰ John Denis, *Denis' Catalogue of Ancient and Modern Books for 1787* (London, 1787); James Lackington, *Memoirs*, 7th rev. ed. (London: Lackington, 1794) 207-10.

³¹ I found the brochure enclosed in a previously uncut volume of Swedenborg's *De la Nouvelle Jérusalem et de sa Doctrine Céleste* (Londres, 1782), which was edited by Chastanier; in archives of Swedenborg Society, London.

³² *Uppfostrings Salskapets Almannatidning* 27 (Stockholm, 1787): 212.

³³ The famous Freemasons' Hall and Tavern were located on Great Queen Street, where Blake spent his apprentice years.

³⁴ For Hindmarsh's inaccurate claim, see Charles Higham, "A London New-Church Advertisement in December 1783," *Morning Light* 36 (1913): 516-17.

³⁵ Count Grabianka recruited Robert Hindmarsh as a fellow Mason in 1786, and his brother John Hindmarsh (an artist) was listed as a Mason in 1783. See Hindmarsh 19, 41-49; and "Index to Antients Register: London Lodges," vol. 41; Grand Lodge Library, London.

³⁶ Photocopies of correspondence by the Nordenskjölds, Wadström, Thomé, and fellow *Illuminés* are preserved in the Academy Collection of Swedenborg Documents (ACSD) at the Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. I am grateful to David Glenn for giving me access to the archives. See also C. F. Nordenskjöld, *Considérations générales sur le Christianisme actuel, et la Lumière que Mr. Emanuel Swedenborg répand sur les Religions* (posthume, 1819); this autobiography was banned and confiscated in Sweden, but a copy was smuggled to London, where Dr. Garth Wilkinson preserved it. There is a microfilm copy (#78) in the archives of the Swedenborg Society, London.

³⁷ ACSD #1664.3101—"List of Those Devoted to Swedenborg's Doctrines," compiled by C. F. Nordenskjöld in 1784. Hindmarsh omitted the names of Cosway, Lord Percy (later Duke of Northumberland), William Bousie (friend of Cagliostro and co-founder of Berlin *Illuminés*), and many others. Nordenskjöld lists 25 names, plus "etc., etc."

³⁸ Hindmarsh 24.

³⁹ C. F. Nordenskjöld to C. B. Wadström, 31 January-13 February 1784; translation in ACSD #1664.31.

⁴⁰ Charles Higham, "James Glen: the New Church Pioneer and Hermit," *The New-Church Review* 19 (1912): 532-72. Glen's Swedenborgian belief in the importance of nudity throws an amusing perspective on the alleged nudity of William and Catherine Blake.

⁴¹ Albert Mason, "Planting the New Church in Massachusetts," *New Jerusalem Magazine* 47 (1884): 129-32.

⁴² ACSD #1664.37.

⁴³ British Library: Add. Mss. 23, 669.f.92.

⁴⁴ Though little is presently known about the Bousie brothers, they played central roles in the development of illuminist Masonry. William was friendly with Cagliostro in London in 1776, helped found the Berlin *Illuminés* in 1778, worked with the Universal and Theosophic societies in 1783-87, and served as liaison between the Swedenborgians in London,

Paris, and Avignon in 1787-90. A full biography is a scholarly *desideratum*.

⁴⁵ The proceedings are reproduced in *Le Monde Maçonique*, 14-15 (1873-74) *passim*.

⁴⁶ *Monde Maçonique* 15 (1874): 165-66.

⁴⁷ Charles Higham, "Pierre Frederic Gosse," *New-Church Magazine* (October 1916) 442-44.

⁴⁸ British Library, Add. Mss. 23, 669.f.99.

⁴⁹ Robert Sundelin, *Swedenborgianismens Historia i Sverige* (Upsala: W. Schultz, 1886) 216.

⁵⁰ See my "Mr. Femality"; Clarke Garrett, *Respectable Folly* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975) 100-20.

⁵¹ See my "Yeats"; Arppe 99.

⁵² Chastanier 25.

⁵³ Grabianka's correspondence in 1788-89 makes clear his continuing Masonic ties with the London Swedenborgians; in "Grabianka Staroste et Les Illuminés d'Avignon, Lettres de Grabianka 1788, 1789," transcripts in Kloss Collection, Grand Lodge Library, The Hague. Though Hindmarsh does not mention it (see 46-47), he was the printer of Grabianka's *Letter from a Society in France, to the Society for Promoting the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem, in London* (London, 1787).

⁵⁴ "Minutes and Papers of the Pro Fide et Charitate Society in Stockholm," p. 439. Trans. and ed. Alfred Stroh. Typescript (1912) in ACSD.

⁵⁵ Quoted by Achatius Kahl in Johan Tybeck, *Le Nouveau Salem* (Bale: J. Schweighauser, 1871) 147. At this time, the *Philalèthes* were competing with the Grand Orient.

⁵⁶ [Benedict Chastanier], *Journal Novi-Jerusalemite* (1787): 149, 165-66, 171; (1788): 105-06.

⁵⁷ Peter Lineham, *The English Swedenborgians, 1770-1840: a Study in the Social Dimensions of Religious Sectarians* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sussex, 1978) 216-20.

⁵⁸ The Duché family remained loyal to Grabianka and the Universal Society; they did not participate at Eastcheap but continued to be involved with the Lambeth Asylum. Thomas Spence Duché corresponded with Rainsford about alchemy and Illuminism until his death in 1790. See Garrett "Spiritual" 153-54, and Rainsford Papers: British Library Add. Mss. 26, 669.f.129-30.

⁵⁹ *Minutes of the Great Eastcheap Conference*. "Minute Book . . . 7 May 1787 to 7 November 1791. Copy in Conference Library, Swedenborg Society, London.

⁶⁰ *Journal Novi-Jerusalemite* (1788): 159.

⁶¹ *Journal Novi-Jerusalemite* (1788): 189-90.

⁶² "Epistolary Correspondence of the Earlier Members of the Church," *Monthly Observer* 1 (1857): 311, 418; 2 (1858): 279-81.

⁶³ For examples, see Swedenborg's *Journal of Dreams*, #87-88, 113, 157, 170-73;

Spiritual Diary, #3208, 3353, 4145, 6055, 6067, 6096, 6110; *Conjugal Love*, #51-55, 110, 310, 258.

⁶⁴ [Augustus Nordensjöld], *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa, under the Protection of Great Britain; but Intirely Independent of all European Laws and Government* (London: Robert Hindmarsh, 1789) 35.

⁶⁵ Paley 71-72.

⁶⁶ The only known copy is preserved among the Nordensjöld papers in the University Library, Helsinki, Finland. That this copy survived the destruction carried out by the sectarians raises the hope that the lost list of 500 readers invited to the Eastcheap Conference might also survive.

⁶⁷ Lindner 136.

⁶⁸ The Universalists published *The New Jerusalem Magazine* in 1790-91, which carried on the illuminist agenda; the Separatists, led by the increasingly conservative Hindmarsh, published the rival *New Jerusalem Journal* in 1792. Rainsford's letters make clear that he continued to promote a secret Masonic lodge that drew together Swedenborgians and students of the occult, until at least 1798. The subsequent history, from 1790 to 1826, will be given in my *The Men of Desire: William Blake and Illuminist Freemasonry* (forthcoming).

Appendix

An ADDRESS to the True MEMBERS
of the NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH,
revealed by the LORD in the Writings
of EMANUEL SWEDENBORG,
who sincerely wish to separate
themselves both internally and
externally from the Old Church:

THE LORD having, by Means of the new Revelation and Opening of his Word, communicated to us the *Spiritual Philosopher's Stone*, which will infallibly operate in the moral World, and by Degrees change and restore it to its primitive Order and Perfection, it is my Intention therefore to shew, by the Observations annexed to this Address, that the Discovery of the *material* or *natural Philosopher's Stone* must of Course take Place, which in like Manner will operate in the natural or material World, by progressively changing and restoring all material Substances to their primitive State of Purity and Splendor.

It is by Means of the Writings of EMANUEL SWEDENBORG that the Foundation is laid for the Destruction of moral Evil; for had not Providence now sent to us these Writings, Adultery and Anti-conjugal Life, the very Fundamental of Hell, among Christians even apparently the most moral, would have soon been regarded as no Sin at all, or as a Matter perfectly unconnected with Religion; and hence Marriages would ultimately become intirely adulterous, and a general Corruption of Manners would have prevailed throughout all Societies.

But for the Destruction of natural Evil, which is the Tyranny of Money, the Foundation cannot be laid, before Alchymy becomes a general Art, and the *Philosopher's Stone* is universally known.

The Difference between the *Spiritual* and *natural Philosopher's Stone*, is nothing else than this; namely that the former is the Opening of the literal Sense of the Word of God, to disclose it's Spiritual Contents, and the latter is the Opening of Gold and Diamond to the Manifestation of *Urim* and *Thummim*. The Reason of this Correspon-

dence is, that the Holy Word is as Gold, Silver, and Diamond, the interior Quality of which has been hitherto unknown, nay, it has been intirely denied.

It is evident that the Abuse of the literal Sense of the Word has been producing and confirming all moral Evil. This detestable and abominable Abuse of these two Things, the one in the *moral World*, and the other in the *natural*, cannot be removed, without their being unfolded, so that their interior Purity and Perfection may be generally known. It then necessarily follows, that the Word cannot be made Use of, as a Monopoly among the Clergy, and moreover Gold, Silver, and their Representations, as a Monopoly among the Wealthy and commercial World.

The *Spiritual Stone*, it is already acknowledged, is to be found in the Word of God, by Means of the Writings of EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, as Man may thereby be regenerated and purified: But the *natural Stone* has not yet been discovered and known. However I hope, with the Assistance of the LORD, that this in a short Time

will also be done, when the Regeneration of all Mankind will commence as well in the Spiritual as in the Natural.

It is easy to see the Importance and Necessity of this Discovery in the New Church, when we consider that by Means of the Unfolding of the literal Sense of the Word, or the *Spiritual Stone*, the LORD has now restored Spiritual Liberty, and destroyed the Monopoly of the literal Sense of the Word among the Clergy, together with their Sulisidian System; but the Correspondence hereof, namely the Restoration of natural Liberty in the Destruction of the Monopoly of Gold, Silver, &c. in the commercial World, and by Consequence their *Money alone*, (which constitutes an abominable Tyranny over Mankind) cannot possibly be effected but by Means of the *natural Stone*, nor can the new Power and Strength, which is now descending from the New Heaven, become operative, before the Correspondence of the interior and exterior of the Substantial and the Natural is completed even in the Ultimates. Therefore, that a plain Idea may be given to every Lover of the New Revelation of the LORD, the following Articles are offered for serious Consideration.

I. That there are two Worlds, the Spiritual or Substantial, and the Natural or Material.

II. That in each World there is a distinct Sun, in the Spiritual World a Spiritual Sun, and in the Natural World a Material Sun.

III. That the Emanation proceeding from the Spiritual Sun is Spiritual Heat and Light, or what is the same, Love and Wisdom.

IV. That the Receptacles of the Heat and Light of the Spiritual Sun are all the Subjects of the Vegetable and the Animal Kingdom, the most perfect of which is Man, who is the true organick Form in all it's Power and Effect.

V. That the Emanation proceeding from the Material Sun is the Material Heat and Light.

VI. That the Receptacles of the Heat and Light of the Material Sun, are all the Subjects of the Mineral Kingdom, such as Airs; Waters; and Earths, the most perfect of which is Gold, which is the principal [un]organick Form in all it's Power and Effect.

VII. Hence it follows, that here on Earth, these two Worlds may be manifestly seen in their Ultimates, viz., the *Spiritual World*, in what is called Organick Nature, including Vegetables, Animals, and man, all which Subjects receive Influx from the Spiritual Sun; the *Material World* in what

is called Unorganick Nature, including Airs, Waters, and Earths, which Subjects receive Influx from the Material Sun.

VIII. That all the material Substances which envelope Vegetables, Animals, and Man, are only borrowed from the material Kingdom, and must be restored again. This is clearly seen, when we consider the first Rudiments of Seeds, and afterwards the successive Food and Increases they receive to their Forms, and lastly their Decay and Death, when their material Forms and Clothes return to the Air, Water, and Earth, which composed them, and from which they were derived, as from a common Store-House of Matter.

IX. Consequently that the material Substances in Organick Nature are not new Matters, in any Respect different from the material Substances which compose Unorganick Nature; which every Natural Philosopher can prove, by decomposing them and reducing them to their first Elements, namely, Air, Water, and Earth, from whence they were derived.

X. And therefore, that the Subject of the physical *Philosopher's Stone* is no wise to be taken from Organick Nature.

XI. That as the Progression of Matters in Unorganick Nature, or in the Material Kingdom, is *first*, all Kinds of Air; *second*, all Kinds of Water; *third*, all Kinds of Salt; *fourth*, all Kinds of Phlogiston; *fifth*, all Kinds of Stones; *sixth* and last, all Kinds of Metals, of which Gold is the highest and most perfect: And inasmuch as all these Kinds of Matters are but Receptacles of the Heat and Light of the Sun in different Forms; and as Gold is the most powerful and complete Receptacle of that Heat and Light; hence it follows, that the physical *Philosopher's Stone* must be a Receptacle of the Sun's Heat and Light, infinitely more powerful and perfect than Gold itself; consequently that the *Philosopher's Stone* can only be made of Gold alone.

XII. That every Angel, by his Wisdom and his Love, is a spiritual and a moral *Philosopher's Stone*, but to attempt to form an Angel out of any other Being but Man, or out of any of the inferior Animals, would be as ridiculous as to attempt to make the physical *Philosopher's Stone* out of any other Matter but Gold itself.

XIII. That the LORD HIMSELF, and consequently His Word, is the true Spiritual and Moral *Philosopher's Stone*; but inasmuch as the fundamental Error in Theology has been the setting up a Trinity of Persons, instead of a Trinity in One Person, so in like Manner the fundamental Error in Alchymy consisted in adopting a Trinity of

Matters, instead of a Trinity or Three-fold principle in the Matter; consequently that it is necessary to take Gold alone to make the physical *Philosopher's Stone*.

XIV. That in all Things, even in the smallest and most simple Substance, there is a Two-fold and a Three-fold Principle; consequently also in Gold itself, the same Two-fold and Three-fold Principles exist; and that those Principles cannot be formed by Composition and Mixture of different Substances.

XV. In short, the whole Universe is composed of two grand Series, or Chains of Links, which is manifested in the general Kingdoms of Organick and Unorganick Nature.

XVI. That the Beginning in the first Series is God in the Spiritual Sun, and in the second Series, the visible material Sun.

XVII. That the last Link in the first Series is Man, and the last Link in the second Series is Gold.

XVIII. Consequently, that there are four cardinal Points, if we may be allowed the Expression, in the whole Universe, namely, God, Man, the Sun, and Gold.

XIX. That to perfect Man, is to render him more and more receptive of God, or of his Heat and Light, that is, or his Love and Wisdom.

XX. That to perfect Gold is to render it more and more receptive of the Sun, or of it's Light and Heat.

XXI. That there are no Bounds in this Perfection; for Men as well as Gold can be rendered more and more receptive of the Heat and Light of their respective Suns, and thus be perfected *ad infinitum*.

XXII. That as God, by means of the Natural Sun as an Instrument, has created all Nature or the Material Kingdom, and also continues to support it thereby; so in like Manner must Man, by Means of Gold as an Instrument, regenerate all Nature, or the whole material Kingdom, and afterwards constantly support it in a regenerate State: For as Creation is the Work of the LORD only, so is the restoring it back to Order or it's Regeneration the Work of Man alone, and that so essentially, that if he doth not study this Doctrine of Regeneration, both he and all Nature must needs remain imperfect to all Eternity, and his Habitation the Earth must also remain in Misery and Wretchedness, which State, however, Man has it in his Power to change into Glory.

XXIII. That in this and in no other Manner, Man can actually become Master of all Nature, for which he was created; he can

restore the Earth, with all it's Materials, and bring it back to Glory, and render the Day of his Tabernacling in the Body a continual State of Bliss, correspondent with the spiritual State of Happiness, which was prepared in him before; consequently that this is only possible with the Man or Members of the New Church of the LORD.

XXIV. That the only genuine Science of Alchemy consists in the three following Branches; namely, 1st, the Theory concerning the Matter; 2d, the Theory of the Furnace; and 3d, that of the Regulation of the Fire. The first Theory shews that Gold is the only Subject Matter of the Work; the second shews that this Work requires a Furnace that can stand the Fire for the Space of a Year at least, and admits of being regulated with Ease and Facility; and the third Theory shews by what a Regulation of Fire Gold may be so opened in the Furnace, as to discover it's two-fold and it's three-fold Principles, and how to put them into Action, in Order to accomplish it's Perfection.

XXV. That the characteristic Difference between the true and the false Alchemist may be seen at once from the Theory of Matter, for, as the first works on no other Subject except Gold *per se*, so the other works on all Sorts of Materials, and is always employed with Compositions and Mixtures; as is the Case with Theology, for true Divinity admits of no other God save JESUS CHRIST alone, whereas the false, on the other Hand, does not accept of the LORD, or when it does, it takes him always in Conjunction with other Powers.

XXVI. The Alchemist who will not see, when it is laid open for him, that Gold only is the Subject Matter of the *Philosopher's Stone*, shews thereby he has little Knowledge in natural History, little in natural Philosophy, little in Chemistry, and none at all in the Science of Correspondences; for from these four Sciences it may be confirmed that Gold *per se* is the only Subject Matter of the *Philosopher's Stone*.

XXVII. That true Alchemy to this Day has been an intirely sealed Science, and an absolutely impenetrable Mystery, is from no other Reason but because they have not been able to see and perceive that Gold *per se* is the only Subject for the *Philosopher's Stone*, and that by Means of this only can Gold be made, or Transmutation rendered possible.

XXVIII. That every other Way or Method that can be imagined, in any Manner whatever throughout all Nature, to make Gold and the universal Medicine, besides

that of exalting and rendering prefect common Gold *per se* for the *Philosopher's Stone* merely by Fire, and after that by Means of the same to operate very wonderful Transmutations, is not only contrary to every Experience, but in the highest Degree irrational and absurd, when examined into with a sound Judgment.

XXIX. However, after being finally convinced that Gold is the only Subject Matter for the making the Stone of the Ancients, our Knowledge would yet be very incomplete in Alchemy, if we had not the Knowledge of the *Construction of the Furnace*, and the *Regulation of Fire*, two Things not to be attained without great and long Experience, although this in itself is very simple when known.

XXX. That in these two chief Points, *viz.* the Furnace, and particularly the Regulation of the Fire, I have laboured these 20 Years, and endeavoured to render myself Master of them; but that I did not till very lately attain to so much Knowledge and Experience as I now have; so that I can at present look on myself as almost Master of these two essential Points.

XXXI. That Alchymical Furnace or Athanor, which I was so happy as to discover 12 Years ago, and which has since been much improved, for Simplicity, Commodity, and the Ease of it's Regulation, is not only the best Alchymical Furnace, but also a real Regulator for Chemists, and all such as use lasting Fires in their Works.

XXXII. That the Regulation of the Fire consists in the Theory of the four Elements of Alchemists, the Weights, the Inclusion of the Matter, or the Hermetic Seal, the two Parts of the Work; namely, the Preparatory and the Afterwork, &c. all which together are nothing else but the Gradation of Fire. The Regulation of the Fire is the most difficult and mysterious Work in the whole Art of Alchemy, and can only be obtained by long Experience.

XXXIII. That in a continual and well-regulated Fire, Gold goes through a regular Circle of Colours, passing from it's own Redness to that of Blood; such a regular Circle of Colours, always consisting of three Colours, *viz.* the Black, the White, and the Red, between which all the other intermediate Colours arise during the Process. Three such regular Circulations at least must Gold undergo, before it can become the true *Philosopher's Stone*, or transmuting Fire. The Gold undergoes only *per se* the first of these Circulations, but all the succeeding Circulations must always be done with the Addition either of

Gold already exalted, or of fresh and raw Gold. The first Revolution takes 9 or 12 Months, the second 2 or 3 Months, and the third is performed in 1 Month or even less. These Revolutions can be so reiterated *ad infinitum*, that the Gold at last will pass through all it's Colours in one hour, or even in a shorter Space of Time, and on the most gentle Fire.

XXXIV. That this Process has in all Respects the most perfect Analogy with the Process of the Regeneration of Man; the fore Part of the Work answering to his Reformation and the Progress of the same, and the after or second Part to the State of Regeneration. The Black Period answers to Repentance, or the Rejection of Evils and Falses, the White to the Implantation of Truth, and the Red to the Implantation of Good; the four Elements answer to the celestial and spiritual, or to the internal and external Good and Truth. The Inclusion of the Matter answers to the Conjunction of Good and Truth, by means whereof Regeneration is veiled over, in the State of Temptations, and so forth.

XXXV. That this complete Science, which in the afore-mentioned Period of 20 Years has been confirmed in me by a most solid Theory, and a very extensive Experience, I now offer to all the Members of the *New Jerusalem Church*, who being fully convinced of it's Reality, find themselves disposed to put this Science into Execution.

XXXVI. This I will do without any Regard to pecuniary interest or Reward, as I would not make a private Advantage of the Things and Gifts of God; consequently whosoever is desirous to receive my Information and Assistance, shall have it gratuitously whenever he gives me Notice, either by calling personally, or by a Letter directed as below. The whole Apparatus can be set up, and put into complete Order, within the Space of three Weeks or a Month.

XXXVII. If one single person (which I should prefer) cannot undertake this highly important Work, I should then advise that several would associate and chuse one in whom they can place Confidence, when I would undertake to instruct him in all that is necessary to this Work.

XXXVIII. The most material Expence for this Course is in the Charcoal or Fuel, after that, in the Board of two or three Servants; and lastly, in the Erection of a proper Laboratory and Furnace. As to the Expence of the Matter itself which is to be used, though it be Gold, it will be very trifling, not exceeding 15 or 20 Grains.

XXXIX. The only Condition I have to impose on teaching the Mystery is, that the Produce shall be consecrated to the Use of the *New Jerusalem Church*, and not to any civil or political Purpose in any Society, where the New Revelation of the LORD is not received.

XL. I had three Ways opened to me to make Use of this Knowledge, acquired in Alchymy, as 1st, to set to work myself in the Process, and thus bring it out; 2d, by Means of an open Publication, to communicate the same to the whole World; or 3d, by Means of a circular Letter to impart the same to the Friends of the New Church only. As to the first, I have already tried it myself for these 20 Years, but not being independent, I was always interrupted in the Pursuit. As to the second Way, I have often intended to do it, but found that, for many Reasons, this Way should not be pursued. The third Way, therefore, appears to me the most useful, and more suited for this present Time.

XLI. At length I must declare, that I have not this Knowledge of myself, but from another, who died in 1756 in Finland, and who had obtained this Science by a supernatural Way. The same had even Revelations concerning the Last Judgment, that was to take Place in 1757, and concerning the New Church of the LORD that was to be established afterwards.

XLII. The latest Author in true Alchymy, EIRENEUS PHILALETHA, an Englishman, lived 100 Years ago in America, and was an anonymous Writer. Since which Time, in the whole learned World there has not been one proper Work published in this Science; and before his Time no other Writings deserve to be read, but what he himself has recommended in his Preface to his *Ripley Revived*, and his *Metamorphosis Metallorum*.

London, May 26, 1789.

AUGUST NORDENSKJÖLD

Member of the New Jerusalem Church in London,
and one of his Majesty's Superintendents of the
Mines in Sweden

P.S. It is particularly requested, that the Contents of this Letter be not made public; and that all Answers be directed for me at MR. ROBERT HINDMARSH'S, Printer to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, No. 32, Clerkenwell-Close, London.

MINUTE PARTICULAR

Blake and the *Edinburgh Evening Post*

David Groves

The *Edinburgh Evening Post* was a weekly 8-page newspaper, with a two-page section entitled "Scottish Literary Gazette." The *Post* is mainly remembered today because Thomas De Quincey was one of its regular contributors during the late 1820s.¹ With "more original discussion than any [other] newspaper in Scotland, the *Post* apparently "acquired considerable reputation as a journal of talent."²

When Dr. John Abercrombie's book, *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth*, was published in Edinburgh in 1831, it received a short review in the Scottish Literary Gazette section of the *Post*. Abercrombie's speculations about ghosts and visions inspired the reviewer to include a brief comparison with William Blake. Although the remarks are not very enlightening, they at least attest to the spread of Blake's reputation in Scotland. The reviewer's allusion to Blake follows his discussion of the "visual phantasm[s]" suffered by Dr. Abercrombie's patients:

In Allan Cunningham's lives of the Painters, our author might have found another curious instance of the same thing, in Blake, the eminent artist, who had such visitors, and the appearance of them was so vivid and steady, that that writer [*i.e.*, Cunningham] tells us, that he [*i.e.*, Blake] actually painted them; and that so docile were his spiritual *sitters*, that they appeared at the wish of his friend [*i.e.*, Blake].

Sometimes, however, (he adds) the "shape which he desired to draw, was long in appearing, and he sat with his pencil and paper ready, and his eyes idly roaming in vacuity, till all at once the *vision* was upon him, and he began to work like one possessed."³

Whoever the author of these remarks may have been, his attitude towards visions was very different from Blake's. The review ends with a recommendation that readers "receive . . . the solid instruction, that those spectral appearances, which terrified our forefathers, are now ascertained to be the results of certain states of body and health, of those to whom they appear." No further mentions of Blake appear in surviving issues of the *Edinburgh Post*.

¹ See Stuart M. Tave, *New Essays by De Quincey: His Contributions to the Edinburgh Saturday Post and Edinburgh Evening Post 1827-1828* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966).

² Anon., "The Edinburgh and Glasgow Newspaper Press," *Metropolitan Magazine* 7 (1833): 98.

³ Anon., "Abercrombie's Inquiries," *Edinburgh Evening Post*, and *Scottish Literary Gazette* 7 May 1831 (150-51). The reviewer quotes from Allan Cunningham's *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, 6 vols. (London: Murray, 1829-33) 2: 167.