

Swedenborg's influence on A.A.'s co-founder Bill Wilson

"In January of 1918 Bill and Lois were married in the Swedenborgian church in Brooklyn, New York."¹

"Bill learned that [Lois' family] were all Swedenborgians, and the mystic aspect of the faith so fascinated them they vowed to explore it more deeply one day."²

So, A.A. co-founder Bill Wilson married into a Swedenborgian family, and Swedenborgian spirituality left a lasting imprint upon him.

From *Lois Wilson's grandpa's Swedenborgian book*:

"This is not to say that Bill Wilson became a Swedenborgian per se, yet his obsession with spiritualism and view of Christ and the Bible must be at least partially attributed to exposure to Swedenborgian teachings. Wilson's understanding of the Bible was further twisted by his acceptance of the Scripture - quoting but Christ - rejecting teachings of New Thought purveyor Emmet Fox."

It can be said that Swedenborg is not only the father of modern day spiritualism, but perhaps the father of the New Thought movement as well.

Swedenborg's influence upon Bill Wilson can be observed during the 1950s when Wilson was experimenting with LSD as a means of helping alcoholics. One of the basic Swedenborgian terms is "influx." Swedenborg wrote about both physical and spiritual influx.

Here are four of Swedenborg's statements about "influx":

"There is no better way to show what is meant by spiritual influx than by comparison with natural kinds of influx that take place and reveal themselves in the world. There is for example the flow of heat from the sun into all earthly objects..." *Arcana Celestia*, paragraph 6190;

"There is a continual influx of power from Jesus Christ Himself... as from the head into the parts of the body, and from the vine into its branches." *A Brief Exposition of New Church Doctrine*, paragraph 5;

"These he has by virtue of his faculty of being able to receive influx from the Lord through the angelic heaven" *Interaction of Soul and Body*, paragraph 12;

"What use would be in all this, if a person were to stand with their hands hanging down, like a carved puppet fitted with movable joints, and wait for God to act upon him? The joints would be stimulated from within to some action which had nothing to do with faith, instead of being able to adapt themselves to **reception of the influx**." *True Christian Religion*, paragraph 356 (emphasis added).

Bill Wilson described the hoped for effect of LSD on alcoholics as follows:

"It is a generally acknowledged fact in spiritual development that ego reduction makes **the influx of God's grace** possible. If, therefore, under LSD we can have a temporary reduction, so that we can better see what we are and where we are going—well, that might be of some help."³ (emphasis added)

It is doubtful that his use of the word "influx" was simply coincidental.

¹ *Doctrinal Relationships Among Alcoholics Anonymous, the Oxford Group, and the New Church*, Robert D. Merrill

² *Bill W*, Robert Thomsen, pg.85

³ *Pass It On*, pg. 370