

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

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":

1. What is meant by spiritual influx cannot be better seen than by means of the natural influxes which take place and appear in this world-as by the influx of heat from the sun into all things of the earth. H.S. 6190
2. There is a continual influx of virtue from Jesus Christ Himself, as from the head into the members, and from a vine into the branches; (Posthumous theological Works of Emanuel Swedenborg Volume One Sess. vi.18) pg. 540)
3. "These he has from the faculty of receiving influx from the Lord through the angelic heaven..." (The Teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, Volume 2)
4. What meaning would there be in all this if man were to stand with his hands hanging down, like a sculptured statue with movable joints, and wait for influx? the joints meanwhile being inwardly excited to something that is not of faith, without being able to apply themselves to the **reception of the influx.**(Swedenborg's Works: True Christian Religion, pg. 484) (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 Robert Thomsen, Bill W., pg.85

³ PASS IT ON, pg. 370